argosy

MAIGRET and STAN the KILLER

and 12 outstanding stories

December

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The blond stranger came every evening, alone

RETURN OF KATERINA

BY HARRY MARK PETRAKIS

IN April of that year, Paul Brademas had been dead two years. His widow, Katerina, lived with his father, Lycurgus, in a small flat above their tavern.

After his son's death, Lycurgus wished to sell the tavern. He was almost sixty himself and wearied of the long hours on his feet. In addition he did not think it proper that a young attractive woman such as Katerina should work in the smoky room of boisterous men.

But Katerina insisted they keep the tavern which brought in a good profit. When she worked hard there was little time left to brood upon the death of her husband. She also felt it provided Lycurgus with a meeting place for a few old friends with whom he could sit in the evening.

In the beginning Katerina's grief for her husband was a wild despair. For a while the memory of their lovemaking was something she could recall at will. At those times she felt her breath become short and her breasts grow taut. And so strong was the love she held for him that she could almost feel again his hands across her body and the strength of his arms about her waist.

But time passed and the seasons changed. In the winter the snow piled in drifts before the tavern. Katerina would rise early to clear the walk before the old man rose. When he came downstairs he would grumble that shovelling was man's work and take the shovel from her hands.

In the spring of the second year after her husband's death, a strange restlessness possessed Katerina. She was no longer satisfied to recall her husband in dreams. She walked in the glittering twilight and felt envy growing in her heart at the sight of lovers in the park.

She visited her husband's grave and placed fresh flowers upon

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the mound of earth. In those moments under the sighing trees she wept and swore eternal love. She waited for some sign that he had heard and understood but the earth made no gesture of redemption.

In the evenings in the tavern she no longer took pleasure in the wild laughter of the men. She became snappish and cross. Her temper flared quickly and she acquired a reputation for an acid tongue. Lycurgus was concerned for her and tried to ease her labour in different ways thinking that perhaps she was working too hard.

After closing up he sent her to bed at once and swept the floor himself and locked the door. The only person left inside was his old friend, Zakinthákis, veteran of ten thousand drinking bouts and three wars. A wise rascal of a man who counted his life of fighting and wenching well spent. Lycurgus disapproved of his friend's morals but enjoyed his company.

After counting the cash Lycurgus took a final glass of mastíha to the table for himself and another for Zakinthákis. They toasted each other solemnly.

" I am troubled over Katerina," the old man told Zakinthákis. " Nothing seems to please her. She has grown as peevish as an old woman."

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Zakinthákis looked into his glass of mastíha and a faint zestful smile curled his thin lips. He admired the fine lush body of Katerina and knew the reason for her distemper. He wished he could still have been the one to comfort her.

" When Paul was alive," Lycurgus said sadly, " she was not like that. They loved each other dearly." He wiped a stray tear from his eye. " It must be her grief," he said. " She still mourns for him."

Zakinthákis sipped at his mastíha and marvelled at how a man could have lived as many years as Lycurgus and still understood so little about women.

" Grief is a terrible thing," he said sombrely, and within him he laughed because he knew that when he died a thousand women would grieve for him . . . but not for long. Then, because the long evening of drinking had dulled him, he spoke without thinking.

" She needs a lover," he said.

Lycurgus sat shocked and rooted to his chair. His lips moved and no words came. Then he found his voice and let out an angry roar.

" Devil ! " he shouted. " Lecher and animal out of darkness. Have you lost your mind?"

Zakinthákis realised his mistake and sighed. He rose heavily to his feet to leave. Lycurgus followed him, raging, to the door.

" You dare speak of my son's wife in that way?" he cried. " Get out, you stepson of some unholy devil!"

Long after Zakinthákis had left, Lycurgus still paced the tavern and hurled curses upon his friend's head. Each time he considered the outrage, his blood flamed anew.

Finally he turned off the last lights and went upstairs. Outside the bedroom of Katerina he listened for a moment at her door. There was no sound from her room and he went to bed.

For a long time he could not sleep. The murmur of the night came through his window. He was restlessly aware of his age and his inevitable death. The years had swept by so quickly. He had never travelled, never cared for cards or drink, and had been shy with girls. A day came when he had married because he could not bear his loneliness any longer. His wife had been a dark and thin woman who wore black for mourning all her life. Rarely would she suffer Lycurgus to caress her and from one of these uncertain unsatisfying unions their only child had been born. But the child was little comfort to Lycurgus because of the domination of the mother. In the boy's seventeenth year, his mother died, accepting death as gratefully as a suppliant. Lycurgus could not grieve for her and accepted joyously the return of his son.

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When Paul married Katerina he wept for their happiness and for his own good fortune. He envisioned the day that grandchildren would scamper around him. But then the young man had fallen sick, and after a short shocking illness had died. As if his mother, dark and brooding from the grave, had called to him to join her.

Lycurgus tossed in helpless despair. Then he remembered Katerina in the room beside his own. Her nearness was a comfort to him, and he slept.

Spring passed into summer. The heat came early in the day and twilight brought no relief. Along the street on which they lived men and women sat before the stores, fanning themselves until long past midnight. The boys and girls ran by squealing to slap one another's bottoms in the dark alleys.

After closing the tavern Lycurgus and Katerina walked for a while in the park. On the grass in long uneven rows, men, women and children slept under the sky. A great sound of whispering, like the drone of countless crickets, rose from the dark and hidden groves.

Back in their flat with the open windows providing no relief from the heat, Lycurgus lay awake in the dark, listening to Katerina in her room. He heard her talking to herself, and though he could not make out the words he heard the bitterness in her voice. Once he thought he heard her weeping, and because he felt she wept for her dead, he cried with her, silently, so she would not hear.

On a night in August a group of strangers came to the tavern. They were loud and bold young men, blond Norsemen, and they drank great quantities of beer. Countless times during the evening Katerina carried trays of beer to their table. They laughed and teased her and a bright flush of pink appeared in her cheeks. They finally left, holding one another up, and the bawdy sound of their voices could be heard rioting from the street.

The next night one of them, a blond young giant with big hands, returned alone. He sat in a corner and did not sing or carry on. Katerina served him several times and lingered at his table.

From that night on the blond stranger came every evening. Whenever he could, Lycurgus served the man whose light pale eyes seemed full of menace. Lycurgus was reminded of tales he had heard as a child, of the villages raided by the pillaging Turks. The burning of houses and the screaming of women.

An evening came when several hours before closing, Katerina

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told him she was not well. He suggested she go at once to bed, but she wished to walk alone for a while and he let her go. It was not until she had left that he noticed for the first time in several weeks that the blond stranger was not at his table in the corner. A cold fear enveloped him but he remembered Katerina's sacred allegiance to her dead and suppressed his apprehension.

Summer passed and the first winds of autumn swept the scent of burning leaves along the street. The days grew shorter and there was a strange still beauty in the nights.

With the passing of summer, Katerina took on a new grace. Lycurgus marvelled at the change. She had thrown off the terrible melancholia and once again enjoyed the laughter in the tavern. Her black hair gleamed lustrous and alive and her body once more appeared lithe and supple. He heard her sing in her room at night.

In the morning as she cooked him breakfast, he basked in her radiance and marvelled at how beautiful she had become once again. He watched her eat with pleasure, the ripe soft lips parting slightly and the small pieces of food going between them. Her cheeks were as soft and unblemished as those of a child and the colour of her flesh was the cool, transparent whiteness of the foam on new milk.

When they had finished she rose from the table and carried the dishes to the sink. She spoke softly with her back to him.

" Papa, I am going away," she said. " I am going to the country for a little while. Now when the leaves are changing and the earth is so beautiful."

" Going away ? " Lycurgus said in alarm. " Katerina, you cannot go away alone! "

" For just a little while," she said gently. " I am weary suddenly of the city and the noise and the disorder."

" It is not right that you go alone," Lycurgus said. " We will close the tavern. We will go away together so that I can look after you."

" I wish to go alone," she said, and then she added quickly, " you do not like to travel. You would come only because you are concerned for me." She bent over the dishes in the sink. " Zakinthákis can help you in the tavern. I will be gone only a little while."

" Zakinthákis! " the old man cried. " I would sooner ask help of the devil! "

" Then find someone else to help you," she said, and there was a firmness in her voice.

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She left the following Friday and was gone for almost two weeks. Lycurgus missed her terribly. At night he could not bear to go to their rooms and stayed downstairs in the tavern long after closing. In loneliness and desperation he accepted the return of Zakinthákis and drank with him for hours.

" She could have waited until I died," he complained bitterly to his friend. " She could have taken her vacation then."

Zakinthákis merely sighed.

At the end of the second week Katerina returned. On a night after Lycurgus had closed the tavern and sat drinking with Zakinthákis.

He had turned off most of the lights, and when he heard the door he thought he had forgotten to lock it and that some patron had entered. Then he heard her voice speak his name and a great gladness leapt in his heart. He rose quickly from the table.

" Katerina! " he cried. " Katerina! "

It was not until then that he saw she was not alone. Only when his eyes became accustomed to the shadows about the door, did he recognise the tall blond stranger.

A terrible distress ran riot in his body. He wanted to cry out but no sound passed his lips. He stared at the silent figure beside Katerina. Never had he hated a man more. He would not let himself think but only let the hot flow of hate sweep over him in waves.

" Papa," Katerina said, and her cheeks gleamed pale in the shadows. " This is my husband, Edwin Larsen."

Then Lycurgus cried out. A cry of pain and anguish. A cry for his dead son and for deceit and the fiendish heart of a woman. He burned suddenly under a white hot flame.

" Thief! " he said to Edwin Larsen, and smoke and fury curled off his tongue. " Vandal, bastard out of darkness! " His voice rose. " I should have killed you the first night I saw you enter."

" Papa, try to understand," Katerina said. " I loved Paul very much. You know I loved him—" Her voice rose and broke— " But you cannot love the dead for ever."

" Not for ever! " Lycurgus said, and he spoke to her in fierce bitterness. " Only two years and you forsake his memory."

" I loved him," Katerina said. " When he died I could have died with him. But I lived, and in the summer I saw the new buds spring to life on the trees and heard the lovers whispering in the dark groves."

" Silence! " Lycurgus cried. " I do not wish to hear your shame."

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Katerina turned and reached back for her husband and brought him into the light. " Papa," she said, " Papa, do you want me back? Tell me now. If you want me back I will come."

Lycurgus looked from her to the stranger. " Alone," he said. " I want you back alone."

" I cannot come alone," she said. " I am married now."

" You are married to my son."

" He is dead," Katerina said.

" I do not want you then! " Lycurgus cried. " I do not want you then! "

Through a mist of grief he saw her turn. Slim beside the tall Norseman, she walked to the door. Her steps made a slight fading sound as she reached the street.

When he could hear her no longer he turned fiercely on Zakinthákis. " Get out," he said. " Leave me alone."

Zakinthákis moved slowly to the door. He paused with his hand on the knob. " I am going," he said. " I will tell you something first, old friend."

" Leave me alone! " Lycurgus cried.

" You do not weep for your son," Zakinthákis said, and his voice was filled with pity and sadness. " You weep for yourself."

And in that instant after the door closed and he was left alone, in that moment of dark revelation he felt the tears explode from his eyes. " Katerina! " and he heard his voice cry her name in the silence. " Katerina! " and only the raven-winged vision of his wife heard and returned to comfort him.

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WHEN SHE COMES . . .

I have a love,
Which I have not given,
But want to give.
And when she comes
I will be hers,
And she mine.
And the hard day
And the soft day
Shall be ours,
Together.
And I will give
And she will give,
Forever.

KIERAN KILROY

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THE AFRICAN QUEEN AND I

BY C. S. FORESTER

IF you ever visit the Movieland Wax Museum at Buena Park you can hardly help seeing two life-size models sitting in the sternsheets of a steam launch. One is of Miss Katharine Hepburn and the other is of the late Humphrey Bogart, and the steam launch is the *African Queen*.

For his performance in the film of that name, Humphrey Bogart received an Oscar, and I have always felt deep resentment that Miss Hepburn did not receive one too. Both performances were quite flawless, as you can see for yourself to this day, because the film is still shown now and then, and sometimes makes its appearance on television. How it all started is something of a story as well.

The recollection of planning *The African Queen* is clearer in my mind than nearly everything else that has happened to me in my working life. I was younger then, ever so much younger, but I had some sort of reputation as a novelist and I lived—odd that this should prove to be desperately important—in a pleasant house in a pleasant suburb of London, now vastly overgrown. Often enough I went up to town, but never of course in the crowded commuters' trains. For me it would be a train well after eleven o'clock in the morning, when not one seat in ten was occupied, and I would catch it after a leisurely stroll to the station, and I would have a leisurely lunch in town, and I was always careful to return either before or after the evening rush, so that I could enjoy to the full the insular Englishman's delight of a railway carriage to myself.

And one day, which seemed at the start to be like any other, to town I went. I had a reason for going; there were matters I had to discuss with my agent, and we discussed them. Then we leaned back in our chairs on our respective sides of his desk while

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he introduced a new topic. A London newspaper, the *News Chronicle* (sad that it ceased publication), had come up with a new idea. It was looking for short serials, each to run for the five days, Monday to Friday. As a matter of course they would have to be interesting and exciting, but also they would have to break naturally into five instalments, each one ending at such a point that the casual reader would be impelled on Tuesday to buy the *News Chronicle* to find out what had happened since Monday. The *News Chronicle* was prepared to pay a handsome price for any story of this sort, and had I any ideas? Of course I had none; and of course it would be a long time before I could have—these were novels that the *News Chronicle* was seeking, and novels took months to germinate.

So I expressed my regrets, and said good-bye, and went out again into the London streets—I remember it so well—and did a small amount of shopping, and drifted into my club for lunch. It was the usual sort of lunch, with the usual sort of chaff exchanged by members. I drank my coffee, glanced through a magazine or two, and walked to Victoria Station to catch an early train home. Then it happened.

At the very moment as I offered my ticket for inspection at the barrier a sudden mental picture came into my mind, with a vividness unusual even for me. A British missionary station in German East Africa, with the news arriving of war being declared in August 1914. A woman—wife? No, sister, of course . . .determined on playing her part. Heat and isolation; that was the setting.

There was no reason at all why I should be thinking of German East Africa nor of August 1914, but here were all the symptoms of a major crisis—the quickened heartbeat, the warm glow of blood coursing under my skin, an actual sensation of a stirring of excitement in my skull, all this despite the fact that I was in Victoria Station, one of the more prosaic places in the world.

I walked on through the barrier and along beside the train—at Sydenham Hill station where I was to leave the train the exit was at the far end, so it was desirable to find a seat at the head of the train. Perhaps if some forgotten railway architect half a century earlier had designed Sydenham Hill station the other way round *The African Queen* might never have been written.

As it was, I had a long way to walk, and at rapid intervals as I did so, four fresh pictures came to present themselves in my mind. A rickety steam launch with a drunken mechanic. A German gunboat dominating one of the great African lakes.

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Rapids and shallows and mangrove swamps. Final disaster. How long was that train? Fifty yards? A hundred? Something of that order, I suppose. It would take a minute or so to walk that distance, and at the end of that minute I was opening a carriage door to board the train and swallowing hard with excitement, pacing up and down the narrow, empty carriage unable to sit still even when the train started.

It was a twenty minutes' run to Sydenham Hill, long enough—far too long, in fact—to review the plot that had formed itself, to decide that it was worth working on, and to observe that it fell naturally into the five sections that my agent had talked about only two or three hours before. So that I did not wait even until I reached home, but went into a telephone booth at Sydenham Hill station and told my agent that after all I had decided to write one of those five-day serials, and he could promise to submit it to the *News Chronicle* in the not very distant future.

No doubt at the other end of the line he shook his head sadly over the unpredictability of the authors it was his unfortunate lot in life to associate with, but little I cared. There was all that early eagerness to seize pen and writing-pad and start work. It is not every day of a man's life that a full-blown novel presents itself in a flash, plot, characters, setting, and all, with no construction work to be done on it—nothing left to be done, in fact, except the mere writing. Not every day by any means; in fact this is the only time it has ever happened to me in a long life of writing, and I have never been able to explain it . . .

Yet the story was written—the student who cares to read it in its final form can still trace the five sections, the demand for which may have triggered off the whole affair. Serial publication was followed by book publication, and the book went along from edition to edition, miraculously surviving the hazards that so frequently terminate the life of a novel. Then came the film, and now Katharine Hepburn and Humphrey Bogart sit in waxen immortality as a result of a moment's excitement at the ticket barrier in Victoria Station in London. © C. S. Forester 1964

The African Queen could have been a splendid period piece. Instead, it is timeless. The two characters, Rose and Allnutt, against a steamy tropical background, are a unique force that moves gently between tragedy and comedy. The dramatic situations are many—but we have chosen an extract that contains all the ingredients that make this book so richly exuberant.

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ALLNUTT drew the *African Queen* into the channel. It was delightful to feel the boat floating free again, even though she could not swing more than an inch to either side. He hooked a root and gave a hearty pull; the boat made a good four feet through the water, and, what was more, retained her way, creeping along steadily while Allnutt sought for a new purchase.

"Blimey," said Allnutt. "We're going at a rate of knots now."

A little later, as they came round a bend in the channel, Rose caught sight of the trees of the delta. They were instantly obscured again by the reeds, but the next bend brought them in sight again, not more than two hundred yards off, and right ahead. She watched them coming nearer. Almost without warning the passage through the weeds widened. Then, abruptly, the reeds ceased, and the *African Queen* drifted sluggishly forward for a yard or two and then stopped. They were in a wide pool, bordered on the farther side by dark trees, and the surface of the pool was covered with water-lilies, pink and white, growing so closely that it seemed as if the whole pool was a mass of vegetation.

The sunlight was dazzling after the green shade of the reeds; it took a little while for their eyes to grow accustomed to the new conditions.

"That's the delta all right," said Allnutt, sniffing.

A dank smell of rotting vegetation came to them across the water; the farther bank was a wild tangle of trees of nightmare shape wreathed with creepers.

"We won't 'alf 'ave a gime getting this old tub through that lot," said Allnutt.

"There's a channel over that way," said Rose, pointing. "Look!"

There certainly was some sort of opening into the forest there; they could see white water-liles blooming in the entrance.

"I 'spect you're right," said Allnutt. "All we got to do now, in a manner of speaking, is to get there."

He remembered the last water-lily pool they had encountered, high up on the Ulanga. There, all they had to do was to get out again, having once entered. Here, there was a hundred yards of weed-grown water to traverse.

"Let's try it," said Rose.

"Course we're going to try it," answered Allnutt, a little hurt.

It was not easy—nothing about that voyage to the Lake was easy. Those water-lily plants seemed to yield at a touch of the boat-hook, and afforded no purchase at all by which they could draw themselves along. Yet at the same time they clung so

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thick about the boat as to limit its progress as much as the reeds had done. Allnutt darkly suspected from the behaviour of the boat that they were being caught upon the screw—that precious screw with the weak blade—and rudder. The bottom was of such liquidity that it offered practically no resistance to the thrust of the boat-hook when used as a punt-pole, and in drawing the pole out again Allnutt found that he pulled the boat back almost as much as he had previously shoved it forward. Volleys of gas bubbles rose whenever the boat-hook touched the bottom; the stink was atrocious.

"Can't we try rowing?" asked Rose. Time was passing with the rapidity they always noticed when progress was slow, and they had hardly left the edge of the pool.

"We might," said Allnutt.

One item in the gear of the *African Queen* was a canoe paddle. Allnutt went forward and found it and gave it to Rose. He brought back a billet of fire-wood for his own use.

Paddling the boat along made their progress a little quicker. There could be nothing slapdash nor carefree about wielding a paddle in those weeds. It had to be dipped carefully and vertically, reaching well forward, and it had to be drawn back with equal care, without twisting, lest at the moment of withdrawal it should be found so entangled as to call for the use of a knife to free it.

It was not a rapid method of transport. Rose would note some cluster of blooms up by the bows, and it would be at least a minute's toilsome work before it was back alongside her. Nor was the *African Queen* adapted for paddling. She had to sit on the bench in the sternsheets twisted uncomfortably sideways; a few minutes' paddling set up a piercing ache under her shoulder-blade like the worst kind of indigestion. She and Allnutt had continually to change sides for relief.

So slowly did they move that when they came completely to standstill they neither of them realised it at once, and went on paddling while the suspicion grew until they looked round at each other through the streaming sweat and found each had been thinking the same thing.

"We're caught up on something," said Allnutt.

"Yes."

"It's that ole prop. Can't wonder at it in this mess."

They stood together at the side of the boat, but of course there was no judging the state of affairs from there.

"Only one thing for it," said Allnutt. He took out his knife, opened it, and looked at its edge.

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"A spot of diving is the next item on the programme, ladies and gents," he said. He tried to grin as he said it.

Rose wanted to expostulate; there was danger in that massed weed, but Allnutt must chance the danger if the voyage was to go on.

"We'll have to be careful," was all she could say.

"Yerss."

Allnutt fetched a length of rope.

"We'll tie that round my waist," he said, as he stripped off his clothes. "You count firty from the time I go under, an' if I ain't coming up by then, you pull at that rope, an' pull, an' pull, an' go on pulling."

"All right," said Rose.

Allnutt sat naked on the gunwale and swung his legs over.

"Good crocodile country this," he said, and then, seeing the look on Rose's face, he went on hastily: "Nao it ain't, There ain't no croc on earth could get through those weeds."

Arthur C. Clarke

Clemence Dane

GEOFFREY HOUSEHOLD

Jack Cope

COMING IN argosy

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Allnutt was not too sure about it himself. He was rising to an unbelievable height of heroism in what he was doing. Not even Rose could guess at the sick fear within him, but in reaction from his cowardice he was growing foolhardy. He took his knife in his hand and dropped into the water. Holding on to the gunwale, he breathed deeply half a dozen times, and then ducked his head under the boat. His legs vanished under the carpet of weed, while Rose began to count with trembling lips. At " thirty " she began to pull on the rope, and she sighed with relief as Allnutt emerged, all tangled with weed. He had to put up a weed-clustered hand to pull a mask of the stuff from his face before he could breathe or see.

" There's a lump like a beehive round that prop, " he said as he gasped for breath. " An' 'alf the weeds in the lake are anchored on to it. "

" Is it any use trying to clear it? "

" Ooh yerss. Stuff cuts easy enough. I'd done a good bit already when I 'ad to come up. Well, 'ere goes agine. "

At the fourth ascent Allnutt grinned with pleasure.

" All clear, " he said. " 'old the knife, will you, old girl? I'm comin' in. "

He pulled himself up over the gunwale with Rose's assistance. The water streamed off him and from the masses of weed which clung to his body. Rose fussed over him, helping to pick him clean. Suddenly she gave a little cry, which was instantly echoed by Allnutt.

" Just look at the little beggars! " said Allnutt—the swear words he still refrained from using were those which, never having come Rose's way, she did not know to be swear words.

On Allnutt's body and arms and legs were leeches, a score or more of them, clinging to his skin. They were swelling with his blood as Rose looked at them. They were disgusting things. Allnutt was moved at the sight of them to more panic than he had felt about crocodiles.

" Can't you pull 'em off ?" he said, his voice cracking. " Arhh! The beasts."

Rose remembered that if a leech is pulled off before he is gorged he is liable to leave his jaws in the wound, and blood-poisoning may ensue.

" Salt gets them off," she said, and sprang to fetch the tin in which the salt was kept.

Damp salt dabbed on the leeches' bodies worked like magic. Each one contorted himself for a moment, elongated himself and thickened himself, and then fell messily on to the floorboards.

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Allnutt stamped on the first one in his panic, and blood—his own blood—and other liquid spurted from under his foot. Rose scooped the remains and the other leeches up with the paddle and flung them into the water. Blood still ran freely from the triangular bites, drying in brown smears on Allnutt's body under the blazing sun; it was some time before they could induce it to clot at the wounds, and even when it was all over Allnutt was still shuddering with distaste. He hated leeches worse than anything else on earth.

"Let's get awye from 'ere," was all the reply he could make to Rose's anxious questionings.

They paddled on across the lily-pool. With the coming of the afternoon some of the pink blooms began to close. Other buds opened, ivory-coloured buds with the faintest tinge of blue at the petal tips. That carpet of lilies was a lovely sight, but neither of them had any eyes for its beauty. They sank into a condition of dull stupidity, their minds deadened by the sun; they said nothing to each other even when they exchanged places. Their course across the pool was as slow as a slug's in a garden. They dipped and pulled on their paddles like mechanical contrivances, save when their rhythm was broken by the clutch of the maddening weeds upon the paddles.

The sun was lower by now; there was a band of shade on the rim of the pool which they were approaching. With infinite slowness the *African Queen's* nose gained the shade. Allnutt nerved himself for a few more strokes, and then, as the shade slid up to the stern and reached them, he let fall his billet of wood.

"I can't do no more," he said, and he laid his head down upon the bench.

He was nearly weeping with exhaustion, and he turned his face away from Rose so that she would not see. Yet later on, when he had eaten and drunk, his Cockney resilience of spirits showed itself despite the misery the mosquitoes were causing.

"What we want 'ere," he said, "is a good big cataract. You know, like the first one below Shona. We'd 'ave got 'ere from the other side of the reeds in about a minute an' a 'alf, I should say, 'stead of a couple of dyes an' not there yet."

Later in the evening he was facetious again.

"We've come along under steam, an' we've paddled, an' we've pushed, an' we've pulled the ole boat along wiv the 'ook. What we 'aven't done yet is get out an' carry 'er along. I s'pose that'll come next."

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This beady-eyed snooper knew something

THE GREAT VAULT MYSTERY

BY DON STANFORD

NOBODY loves an efficiency expert Mr. Driscoll thought, as he came in shaking the rain from his overcoat, and turning to look with distaste at the glittering rimless glasses and pallid, smug face of the Main Office man who had been snooping around all the week.

As vice president in charge of the Radio City branch of the Knickerbocker Bank, Mr. Driscoll was secure in the knowledge that his branch was as well run as any bank was likely to be. He had stood upon the privilege of his white hair and his fifty years of service, and he had been assured that this beady-eyed snooper was here only in the course of a routine check of all branches; still, he could not help bristling every time he saw the man.

"Well, Goodwin?" Mr. Driscoll said icily, seating himself at his vast gleaming desk and pointedly drawing his engagement calendar a little nearer. "I'm afraid I can only give you a minute. Busy afternoon. What is it this time?"

"The vaults, Mr. Driscoll." Goodwin's voice and manner were oily, deferential to the point of servility, but a sour insolence lurked, barely concealed beneath the surface unctuousness. "As I rather think I told you several days ago, the four private service rooms in the safety deposit vaults seem to be inadequate for the needs of your boxholders at times. At the mid-day period particularly. It is frequently necessary for an important customer of the bank to be kept waiting for his box while all four rooms are in use."

"And as I rather think I told you," Mr. Driscoll said coldly, "there isn't an inch of space down there for the construction of another service room, which I believe you recommended. And in my experience, a customer rarely spends more than a few minutes with his box anyway. He signs in, the guard takes him

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and the box to a service room, he puts something in or takes something out or clips off a few coupons, and that's it.

" Those cubicles don't invite one to linger—there's nothing in them but a bit of carpet, a couple of chairs, a desk, writing materials and scissors. I scarcely think anyone's kept waiting long."

" Indeed? " Goodwin said, and arched his thick eyebrows. " Then perhaps it will interest you to know that one cubicle has been occupied *daily*, over a period of nearly four months, for one hour each day. Always by the lessees of the same box, and always during the busiest time—between twelve-thirty and one-thirty."

" Ah? " Mr. Driscoll said, and waited, while a small cold lump grew in his elderly stomach at the self-satisfied smirk on the efficiency expert's face.

" Box Number 1773, a minimum-size box renting at seven dollars yearly, is jointly held by a Mr. Herbert Graves and a Miss Ann Simmons," Goodwin droned in his oily voice, his spectacles glittering. " Mr. Graves and Miss Simmons have found it necessary to visit the vaults daily for four months and to monopolise a service room for the busiest hour of the day. Mr. Graves and Miss Simmons are in your outer office, waiting to see you."

Mr. Driscoll said startled, " But why? "

" I was curious," Goodwin said almost dreamily, looking like a plump cat full of goldfish, " concerning the nature of the business these two people transacted daily in our vaults. So today I

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determined to let myself in, using the guard's key, as though I had accidentally opened the wrong service room. I could then apologise and back out quickly, but in the meantime I fancied a trained eye would detect if anything irregular was going on—"

"Now, see here!" Mr. Driscoll exploded, "you have no right to do anything like that, and especially not in my branch! We furnish those rooms as a service to our boxholders; their primary purpose is privacy. There is no rule governing the extent to which a customer may use the facilities, and I forbid you to commit any such intrusion upon my customers' privacy!"

"Sorry," Goodwin said perfunctorily. "I've already done it. That's why the customers in question are outside. It occurred to me that, while there may be no rule governing the *extent* to which a customer is entitled to use those rooms, there may well be a policy governing the *purpose* to which he may put them.

"So I went down to the vaults a half hour ago, ascertained that Room Four was signed out to Box 1773 as usual, and—ah—intruded."

The efficiency expert patted his lips delicately with a crisp handkerchief, restored it to his pocket, and said blandly, "The service rooms in this bank happen to be soundproof. The blare of sound when the door opened was therefore startling.

"I personally turned off the portable radio which was playing very loud jazz, as quickly as I could, and I then requested Mr. Graves and Miss Simmons to pack the remains of their picnic lunch back in the briefcase in which they had brought it, and to come up here at once." Goodwin cocked his pale face to one side and, with fine dramatic effect, he stepped to the door and opened it with a flourish . . .

They were very young, Mr. Driscoll observed at once, and in spite of the young man's defiantly protective attitude towards the girl—a startlingly pretty little girl too—they were both badly scared. The cold impersonal authority of a bank official would scare them, and no doubt Goodwin knew how to use it. Well, Mr. Driscoll hadn't worked for the Knickerbocker Bank for fifty years without learning a trick or two himself.

"It never occurred to me that anyone would want to eat lunch in a bank vault," Mr. Driscoll said smiling, and saw some of the young man's wary stiffness melt under his smile. "Sit down, please, both of you, and tell me all about it."

"There isn't much to tell," Herbert Graves began, and Mr. Driscoll noted his pleasant, engaging manner with approval. And suddenly the girl Ann Simmons giggled, a silvery, pleasant sound, and said musically. "It didn't occur to us either for a

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long time. But I live in Glen Ridge, New Jersey, and Herb lives in Hempstead, Long Island, so you can see we can't have dates during the week, only at weekends." Then she went on, " So lunch dates are very important. And we can't afford fancy restaurants, because we're saving up to get married. And we'll go to the park when the weather gets warmer, but in the meantime where else could we rent a private room for seven dollars a year? "

" I don't know," Mr. Driscoll said, and she winked at him and he could not resist winking back just to see Goodwin's horrified expression. Then he made his manner very solemn and leaned forward and said seriously, " I really don't know. I think you are both very ingenious, and there's no doubt at all in my mind that you'll go far together, and I hope you're saving in my bank. You've been rudely and discourteously treated by an employee of this bank who should know better, but I can assure you that Mr. Goodwin is only here temporarily and I hope you will accept my apology on behalf of the Knickerbocker Bank.

" Now then: we really do need that service room for other purposes, and since you are certainly entitled to use it as much as you please, it is to this bank's advantage to help you get married as soon as possible. I hope you come in as soon as you can and let me go over your financial plans with you—we finance homes, and furnishings, and all sorts of things for our customers . . .

" And—don't go, Mr. Goodwin, I want to see you in just a minute—until the spring, may I offer you the use of my office during my lunch hour? For nine years I've gone to lunch from twelve-thirty to one-thirty; Mr. Goodwin tells me that's your hour too. My secretary will see that you're not disturbed, and the Bank will consider it a great favour if you will release your other room . . . "

The girl's eyes were dancing with the laughter she was holding back, the boy was grinning broadly. They were a darned good-looking young couple; it would be a pleasure to watch them grow in years to come. It would be nice to keep them here and chat but there would be other occasions for that.

Right now it was going to be a busy afternoon, and there was poor Goodwin squirming wretchedly, quaking in his boots at the thought of the report Mr. Driscoll would send to head office.

" Come in again soon," Mr. Driscoll said cordially, rising with his young customers, and escorting them to the door. Then turning, he said without malice, " Now, Goodwin, I am going to bawl the hell out of you, and then we'll forget it. There's more to banking than just efficiency! "

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She sensed danger—and made a decision

THE LONG HOUSE

BY ELIZABETH LEMARCHAND

"THERE'S Tom," said Jenny Stanbury, pausing at the gate. "Oh look, Colin, they've cleared the site. It's much bigger than we thought. Who's the old boy he's talking to?"

"I've often seen him around," replied her husband, "but I don't know his name. Yes, you're right. There's going to be plenty of room."

Leaning their arms on the top of the gate, they contemplated their newly-acquired property. The small, unkempt field was wedge-shaped, with the blunt end to their left. Here two men stood talking in a slight hollow, on the far side of which was a coppice of larch and silver birch, delicately colourful in the March sunlight. It was warm out of the wind, and lark song came cascading down out of the spring sky.

"We'd better go along," said Colin, heaving up the gate which was partly off its hinges. As they made their way over the rough grass, skirting clumps of whins, Jenny sniffed happily.

"Coconut buns just out of the oven," she said. "It's the sun on the gorse flower."

Their friend and architect, Tom Bridges, caught sight of them and raised his hand. Tall and loose-limbed, he towered over his companion, a tubby elderly man who was wearing a duffle coat.

"Here you are," he said. "Good. Meet my friend, Mr. Fairholt. You'll know his name, of course: the archaeologist. I'd better explain," he went on, after the introductions, "that I asked him to come over because I thought we might be on to something interesting on this site of yours. There's been a house here before: a classic long house, about fifty feet by fifteen. See the foundations, now we've cleared the gorse and brambles?"

"Good lord!" exclaimed Colin Stanbury in dismay. "Don't

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tell us, sir, that it's going to be an Ancient Monument and can't be built on!"

Mr. Fairholt beamed at them.

"Alas, no—from my point of view, that is. Nothing remarkable, I fear. The long house was the common mediaeval design, you know. A central covered passage with the living-quarters or hall on one side and, on the farms round here, a shippen for the beasts on the other. There are a great many local examples either adapted to modern usage or in ruins."

"Thank goodness," said Jenny in tones of heartfelt relief, "although I'm sorry if you're disappointed, Mr. Fairholt. We're absolutely set on putting the house just here. It's the perfect site: sheltered, a south aspect, and that heavenly view."

"A delightful spot," agreed the archaeologist. "It is curious that the original house was not rebuilt after the fire."

"The fire?"

"Yes, indeed. It appears to have been burnt to the ground. In the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century, I should say."

He led them to the exposed foundations and indicated the blackened granite on the inner side, where he had cut away the turf.

"I am off now to inspect *Criddledon*, the farmhouse along the lane," he said, rising to his feet and dusting his knees. "There is a distinct possibility that it may have been built with the stone removed from here."

"There's a nice young chap up there called White," Colin told him. "I bought this field from him. But he's new to these parts and won't know any local history, I'm afraid."

"Ah!" Mr. Fairholt waggled an admonishing finger. "The fire-blackened granite could prove a conclusive piece of evidence."

He hurried off across the field with the intentness of a terrier on the scent.

"It's made his day, dear old chap," said Tom Bridges as they watched him. "Now, then. We had a satisfactory report on the spring water from the analyst this morning . . ."

As the conversation became increasingly technical Jenny wandered off down the steep path, and stood watching the stream. After a dry spell the water, golden-brown and peaty, was running low, creeping round the litter of granite in its bed. The four stepping-stones stood high and dry.

If we can get in by Easter of next year, she thought, Emma will be six, and Luke nearly five . . . It'll be heaven for them.

Retracing her steps she stopped again, staring at the site.

"A *long* house is exactly what would look right here," she said

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rejoining the two men. "Long and low, with almost all the windows south, and a flagged terrace out in front."

"Like this, in fact?" Tom Bridges sketched rapidly.

"That's it!" she exclaimed in delight. "Look, Colin. We'll call it *The Long House*."

As the months went by the house rose, sturdy but gracious, its grey stone façade and simple lines perfectly adapted to the Devon countryside. The Stanburys visited the site so frequently that there was little sense of strangeness at the time of their move.

"Oh Mummy, it's super," sighed Emma, coming in wet, dirty and blissful from the stream one morning.

Jenny laughed, but reflected gratefully on the luck which seemed to have attended the venture . . . the unexpected excellence of the village school for Emma, the willing domestic help and baby-sitting from a nearby cottage, and the helpfulness of the Whites at *Criddledon*. Colin, too, was finding commuting less trying than they had feared, and the ten-mile drive out from Hoymouth did not seem to deter their many friends.

As spring ran on into summer the whole family settled happily into a new rhythm. Jenny enjoyed evolving a different housekeeping technique. Mid-July brought a spell of perfect summer weather.

"Silence, space and seclusion," remarked Colin one evening, leaning on his spade. Around him his blueprint for the garden was slowly taking shape.

"And beauty," added Jenny, looking about her. "It's all so marvellous I feel slightly tight most of the time."

The next morning, having waved Emma off to catch the school bus at the end of the lane, she went back into the house with a glance at Luke, who was playing on the terrace. His last summer of freedom, poor darling, she thought. She was soon absorbed in cooking up for the weekend in her gay and well-planned kitchen. Overhead the whir of the vacuum cleaner brought the reassurance that Mrs. Burt was on her daily round. From time to time the voices of children came floating in at the window. The little Whites, she thought, catching some broad West Country vowels.

The final batch of pastry and cakes out of the oven, she ran upstairs to make hasty repairs to her make-up, and, taking a basket, went out of the house. Luke had reverted to his solitary game on the terrace, closely watched by Nobby, the family's wire-haired terrier.

"Like to come with me to *Criddledon* to fetch the eggs?" she called to him.

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Luke scrambled to his feet, an engaging figure clad only in bright blue shorts, his small body sunburnt to a golden brown, and his flaxen hair just beginning to darken.

"Can I have a bun first, Mummy?"

"You can take one from the cooling-rack. Only one, though."

They went up the lane together, escorted by Nobby; Luke absorbed in his bun. The high hedges were spiked with foxgloves and frothy with Queen Anne's Lace. Jenny picked a spray of honeysuckle and threaded it through a buttonhole.

"I'm keeping a bit of bun for Spot and Patch," Luke announced.

"I expect they'll be out in the fields with Mr. White," she told him.

"Nobby doesn't fight them now."

"No, thank heaven," said Jenny with feeling. She led the way round to the back door of the farm. It stood open, but the kitchen was empty. She knocked loudly. After an interval footsteps came hurrying from a distance, and Jane White, the farmer's energetic young wife, appeared.

"So sorry to keep you, Mrs. Stanbury. I thought it might be you. Come for your eggs, I expect? They're all ready for you. I'm a bit at sixes and sevens this morning, tell you the truth. The children are poorly. I was up and down half the night with them. Something's upset them, and I'm keeping them in bed this morning. They still can't take in anything but a drink of water."

"I'm so sorry," said Jenny, "I'd no idea. I thought I heard them in our garden just now. Is it something they've eaten, do you think?"

"Too many raspberries and too much cream, if you ask me," replied Jane White, taking the basket. "That reminds me, I've put back your cream, Mrs. Stanbury. Maybe you'd like to take it along with the eggs, and pop it into your fridge?"

She vanished into the dairy.

How odd, thought Jenny, as they retraced their steps along the lane. I could have sworn I heard those children playing with Luke.

"Who was playing with you in the garden when I was cooking?" she asked him.

To her surprise, he did not answer. Glancing at him, she saw that his eyes were on the ground.

"Will and Joan," he said at last.

"Will and Joan who? What's their other name?"

"Don't know."

"Where do they live?" she asked.

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" In our house, of course," he answered impatiently.

Illumination flooded in on her. This was one of the childhood fantasy games that one must be so careful not to disrupt. But how well he'd picked up the little Whites' accent and mimicked it.

" Oh, I see," she said, looking at him affectionately as they reached the back gate, and tactfully let the subject drop.

Colin was amused too, when she told him about it that evening.

" Rum things, kids," he said. " I had an imaginary dog when I was about Luke's age. A St. Bernard, of all things. I pretended it slept by my bed, and used to put out my hand to stroke it. I honestly believed I felt its coat."

As she finished putting away the supper things, Jenny remembered that she had not shut the playroom windows for the night. The room was beyond the kitchen, at the far end of the house. Going in, she found the toy cupboard wide open. The lid of a box was propped against it, and on it Emma had scrawled in shaky blue capitals the words, *You can Play with our Toys.*

So Emma was in the game too . . . School hadn't yet destroyed the fantasy world of her early childhood. . .

A few nights later Jenny woke suddenly with the conviction that she had just heard a door shut. A second later came the scratch and whine of Nobby, outside the bedroom door. Good old Nobby . . . Emma must have been up, and he'd come to tell her. Luke would have come to her himself.

She got up quietly, anxious not to wake Colin, who had had a long day, and tiptoed across the room in the bright moonlight. As she gently opened the door, to her amazement, Nobby forced his way through it and without a sign of recognition streaked to ground under the bed. Startled, she ran along the passage to the children's room, only to find them both peacefully asleep.

Coming out again, she stood at the top of the stairs, listening painfully. Everything was quiet and apparently normal. After looking into the other rooms on the landing she went down to the hall, putting on lights and inspecting doors and windows. It was not until she had reached the kitchen that she became aware that she was reluctant to go into the playroom. Without examining her motives too closely, she stood irresolute outside the door, entertaining the idea of turning the key in the lock and going back to bed. She had not stopped to put on a dressing-gown and slippers, and was shivering a little. With an effort she pulled herself together—it was really too ludicrous to be frightened by your own children's make-believe—opened the door, and pressed down the light switch. Then she saw the rocking-horse.

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It was rocking gently backwards and forwards, slowly coming to rest, just as it did when one of the children had been on it. The reins and the stirrups were swinging in small independent rhythms. Her eye was inexorably drawn to Emma's chalked notice: *You can Play with our Toys.*

Jenny pressed her hand to her mouth, leaning up against the doorpost, the sharp edge of the wood uncomfortable through her thin nightdress. A whir from the cuckoo clock on the wall made her start violently. The bird erupted, announced two o'clock, and vanished again with a clatter. The rocking-horse was now nearly—but not quite—still. She turned abruptly and came out.

As she came along the corridor there was a faint sound, and Nobby appeared looking sheepish, his tail at half-cock. Here, at any rate, was something real to cope with. Jenny knelt down and hugged him.

"It's all right now, old man," she whispered. "Good boy!"

Leaving him happily settled she went back to her room. Colin was still sleeping heavily. When she slipped into bed he stirred a little, and put out a hand to touch her. There won't be time to talk to him about this in the morning, she thought. I'll have to wait till he gets back . . .

Just before lunch, Colin rang up to say that he would be bringing back a colleague for drinks, to discuss a business deal.

"O.K.?" he asked. "You sound a bit low."

"Perfectly O.K.," Jenny answered. "I'll knock up some high-class snacks. A nuisance though; you're tired."

"Never mind. It'll be well worth it if the deal comes off. Only a fortnight to my holiday, anyway. See you any time after six, then, darling."

He rang off.

The children bathed and safely in bed, Jenny changed her frock and came downstairs. After a final glance at her preparations she sat down at the open French window with a newspaper, but her reading was desultory. She found herself wondering if the events of the night could possibly have been a dream after all. They sounded so utterly preposterous when she tried to frame sentences for her conversation with Colin.

The sound of an approaching car broke in on her thoughts. A few moments later Colin drew up, followed by a second car. She went out on to the terrace, and Colin introduced Philip Dixon, a pleasant middle-aged man who expressed unqualified admiration of the house and the view.

"Do come in," she said, after they had talked for a few minutes. "You must both be dying for a drink."

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The visitor relaxed gratefully in a chair opposite her own.

"Who was the chap you were talking to?" inquired Colin, standing at the drinks tray with his back to them.

"What chap?" Jenny asked in surprise.

"Why, that rustic-looking type outside the window a few minutes ago. I saw him as I turned in at the gate."

She had never realised before how swiftly one could sense danger and make a decision.

"Oh, the man with a message about eggs from *Criddledon*," she heard herself answering casually. "I'd forgotten about him."

The conversation turned inevitably to the relative merits of free range and battery eggs. After a suitable time she rose, saying that she would leave the two men to talk shop. Much to her relief, Mr. Dixon declined polite urgings to stay on to supper. She found it impossible to settle to anything, and wandered restlessly round the house, longing for him to go. In the playroom

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the chalked notice was propped against the open toy cupboard again.

As they finished their belated supper, Jenny suddenly looked across the table.

"There wasn't anyone on the terrace when you came home this evening, you know."

"What on earth do you mean?" demanded Colin, setting down his coffee cup, but not before she had seen the fleeting expression of dismay on his face.

"There's something odd about this place, Colin," she said steadily. "You know it as well as I do. We'd much better talk it out."

"What's worrying you?" he asked guardedly.

"Well, if I come clean I hope you're prepared to do the same," she said, and proceeded to narrate her experiences of the night.

argosy for Christmas

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He stretched across and took her hand. " And you didn't wake me," he said. " You know, there just aren't such things as ghosts. Not dead people returning, and all that."

" Perhaps not, in that crude sense," she said, " but what do you think all this adds up to? We can't all be imagining things. There's even Nobby to take into account."

" There seems to be reliable evidence," Colin replied thoughtfully, " that there *are* places where the past somehow gets over to the present—it rather looks as though we've struck one of them, doesn't it? I'm thinking of that earlier house on the site. But obviously that sort of thing can't hurt one."

" It might frighten the children to death," Jenny objected.

" They don't seem to have been frightened up to date, quite the reverse."

" Well, it's your turn now. I want to know what you've seen yourself, and never let on about."

Colin grinned.

" No getting past you, my girl, is there? My own private little bit of fun was last Thursday—the day I got in early, do you remember? I drove straight round to the garage, and just as I was running in, I saw—or thought I saw—a chap lying on a heap of straw in the middle of the floor. He looked like a tramp—shaggy hair and beard, and ghastly ill, with his eyes sunk right into his head. He reared up, and then sort of flopped back. I thought some poor devil had been taken ill and managed to crawl in for shelter. I jammed on the brakes like hell, but it was too late. I seemed to go right over him. I leapt out of the car, and—well, there was no one there. I must say I felt pretty shaken up, and thankful you and the kids were down at the stream. It gave me time to pull myself together."

" Isn't there anything we can do? " Jenny asked, after a long pause.

" Bell, book and candle, do you mean? Or prayer and fasting? Or the Psychical Research Society? "

" I don't think I really know what I mean. We simply mustn't risk doing anything that might get round. Suppose the papers got on to it."

" I know. As a matter of fact it did occur to me that we might get in touch with old Fairholt. You remember him, the archaeologist who came over that day with Tom? We could just say we were interested in the history of the place."

" That's a marvellous idea. I feel I shouldn't mind extraordinary things happening nearly so much if only I knew what it was all about."

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"Then I'll go ahead," said Colin. "Charter him professionally, and say we want anything he finds out kept quiet, in case people come nosing round."

August brought Colin's and Emma's holidays. *The Long House* buzzed with activity, for friends and relations taking their own holidays in the West often called in and sometimes stayed overnight, while the little Whites spent much of their time playing with Emma and Luke. Jenny, surfacing at intervals from domesticity, found herself wondering if the past were being submerged by the vitality of the present, for there were no further unusual incidents. She said as much to Colin, who was busily engaged in preparing the rose garden immediately beyond the terrace. He agreed that it was a perfectly sound working hypothesis.

During the third week in August the weather turned sultry, and even the children's energy flagged.

"You two had better have a longer rest now," Jenny said to them after lunch one day. "You can go to bed later, to make up. It'll be cooler then."

As they climbed slowly up the stairs, to her sharp dismay she heard Luke saying something about Will and Joan.

"But they're *ill* in bed," Emma objected. "We're just resting."

That vile game again, she thought, with the anger of fear, as she watched them disappear. I was so sure they'd forgotten all about it. She found herself with an uneasy feeling that mentioning the past might somehow lead to its manifesting itself again. Finally she decided to say nothing to Colin.

"What we want," Colin remarked late that evening, as they finished watering the garden, "is a crashing thunderstorm. Let's go down to the stream. It might be a bit cooler."

Dusk was settling as they strolled across the garden and went down the steep little path, smoking cigarettes to keep off the midges. Nobby accompanied them languidly, declining to go farther than the top of the path. Colin had made a rustic seat on the bank, and they sat side by side, relaxing in the spaciousness and peace of a summer night in deep country. A faint murmur rose from the water.

The silence was abruptly shattered by the mournful, eerie howl of a dog.

"Wretched animal!" exclaimed Jenny, starting to her feet. "He'll wake the children. What on earth's the matter with him?"

She hurried up the path, Colin close behind her. As they reached the garden level she stopped dead, Colin's grip on her

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arm the last link with the world they knew before the past enfolded them.

At first her attention was riveted by the poignancy of the two roughly-made little coffins lying on the ground. There were bunches of roses on them, the old-fashioned red and white cabbage roses of country gardens. A group of men was bearing down on them from the direction of the lane . . . Distracted by a disturbance on her right, Jenny turned to see that the house was no longer the one she knew. It had become massive, with tiny windows and a big porch where a man tried to comfort and restrain a woman frantic with grief, who struggled to break free. The men were shouldering the coffins and moving off. One, bringing up the rear was making threatening, deterrent gestures as he looked back . . .

She was running up the stairs with Colin now, switching on the lights and bursting into the children's room. Luke, his sheet flung back, lay in the profound sleep of childhood. Emma stirred and began to sit up, looking about her with unseeing eyes, and whimpering, " They've gone. Gone right away."

" It's quite all right, darling. Lie down and go to sleep now."

Jenny quieted her, and she quickly sank into sleep again.

" Come on," said Colin, drawing her out of the room.

As they came to the head of the stairs Nobby was looking up at them from the hall, his tail wagging furiously.

" It must be all right now," Jenny said, with a slightly hysterical giggle. " He seems to be a kind of ghost barometer! "

" The operative word is drinks—stiff ones," replied Colin, steering her firmly down to the sitting-room, and putting her into a chair.

He was coming across the floor carrying the glasses when the shrilling of the telephone made them both jump. Swearing fluently, Colin went into the hall to answer it. Jenny sat on passively, the one-sided conversation going over her head. At last he rang off and came back.

" That was old Fairholt, funnily enough. He says he's found out a bit, but not much. His report up to date is in the post."

Jenny sipped, and began to feel more like her normal self. Colin looked at her anxiously.

" You're quite sure you don't want to throw your hand in, Jen? There's nothing to stop us from selling the place—bar the nuisance of it."

" No," she said with conviction, " not unless it started frightening the children. I adore the whole set-up—we all do. Besides,

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I've been thinking, it may only be at this time of year. We were here for months before anything happened."

"The anniversary of the kids' dying, perhaps? It's a thought. Holy smoke! who would believe it all, anyway?"

"I found some relevant entries in the Parish Register," Mr. Fairholt had written.

1609: *Aug.* 23. *Buried a poore journeyinge man, d. Crydeldon*
Aug. 28. *Buried Wm & Jne, yonge sonne & d'ter of Jn & Mgrt Tickner of Crydeldon*

"It seems not improbable that the deaths were connected, in view of the short interval between them. My tentative suggestion is that the man arrived with the plague on him, sickened, and died, having infected the children. There were bad outbreaks of plague in these parts in the early seventeenth century.

"It is curious that there is no record in the Register of the Burials of the Tickner parents. Presumably they left the parish, perhaps selling the farm. The original house was certainly burnt down—possibly deliberately, on account of the risk of infection. I am convinced that its stone is largely incorporated into the present *Criddledon* farm, the early deeds of which are unfortunately missing. After August 28 1609, the name does not recur until 1630, when a boy was baptised, *sonne of Thos. and Prudence Hayman, of Crideldon.*"

"That seems to cover it pretty thoroughly, if Fairholt's surmises are correct," said Colin. "You were right about the anniversary idea: yesterday was the 28th."

"Yes." Jenny put down the letter. "Even if it all happens again next summer, it won't be nearly so upsetting."

"I do think, you know, that it's perfectly reasonable to expect that it will fade out as our own lives get more and more bound up with the place."

"I don't know that I want it to fade out absolutely," said Jenny meditatively. "Obviously something really tragic happened to the Tickner family, and I'd like to feel there was some sort of link between them and us. I'm not sure that past and present are all that separate."

"What sort of link?"

"Well, as a matter of fact I often think about those pathetic bunches of roses on the children's coffins. Could we plant some red and white ones in that far corner of the rose garden as a kind of little memorial, do you think?"

"Of course we could, if you'd like to. I don't suppose we can

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get the old cabbagy kind now, but there are endless new reds and whites."

"Ena Harkness, and Etoile de Hollande and McGredy's Ivory. Let's look at the catalogue. . . "

In June, the rose garden exceeded all their expectations.

I wonder if there'll be a decent second crop by late August, thought Jenny, snipping off the dead heads. That day at tea she she ventured to probe cautiously.

"Do you remember that notice you put up last summer, telling Will and Joan they might play with your toys?"

Emma went pink and looked embarrassed.

"Kids' stuff," said Luke grandly. "That was before I went to school."

July passed tranquilly, with no untoward happenings, and the village school broke up. Soon Colin was at home on holiday too, and a busy and happy August was in full swing. As if by tacit consent, he and Jenny made little reference to the events of a year ago, but on August 27th she put forward a suggestion.

"Tomorrow night let's do exactly the same as we did last time —just to make certain we're all clear."

He agreed.

The next day *The Long House* was unusually empty and quiet, with Colin away playing in a cricket match, and Emma and Luke spending a day at the sea with friends. Jenny enjoyed her solitude although aware that her eyes and ears were alert.

Nothing will happen now, she told herself, as they watered the garden after supper. She paid loving attention to Will and Joan's corner where the second blooms seemed particularly fine, conscious of secret pangs of disappointment as she did so.

"Let's have this anniversary stroll, and then go and put our feet up," said Colin, as he coiled up the hose. "I'm aching from my exertions. Where's the hound?"

They looked around for him. Jenny exclaimed and pointed. The terrier was standing among the red and white roses, intensely interested in something. As they watched him two small, quaintly-clad figures came running out, their hands full of flowers, Nobby scampering beside them with short joyous barks.

Against the sombre background of the old house the scene was suddenly irradiated as the children sprang into their parents' arms . . . now they were all four setting off together, hand in hand, the children giving little skipping steps.

Colin and Jenny stood looking at the gracious house that they had built. Nobby came trotting towards them with a faintly puzzled and apologetic air.

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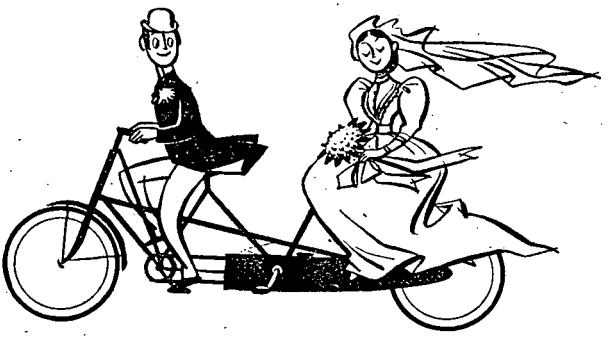

Cave Cyclem

The modern bicycling craze is not only far beyond a girl's strength, but it tends to destroy the sweet simplicity of her girlish nature ; besides, how dreadful it would be if, by some accident, she were to fall off into the arms of a strange man !

MRS. LYNN LINTON, 1897

Velocipeded !

I finished my model of a coach which is to go without horses, an invention I made upon seeing the travelling chaise by Grosvenor Square.

Thinking upon this affair produced my invention which imitates the motion of skating. The contrivance is this: I make the axis of the hinder wheels with a double crank, to these cranks are applied two arms downwards, to them two horizontal foot-boards hanging in joints. The man that works the machine stands on these two foot-boards and moves them up and down alternately with first one foot, then with another. This must needs turn the wheels round that are fixed to these axes, whereto the cranks are annext, and push the machine forward with that degree of celerity you please. The fore part is contrived for turning.

WILLIAM STUKELEY, 1740

Single Combat

He set to work to refix the gear-case. He stood the bicycle against the house, and worked from the off side. Then he stood it against a tree, and worked from the near side. Then I held it for him, while he lay on the ground with his head between the wheels, and worked at it from below, and dropped oil upon himself. Then he took it away from me, and doubled himself across it, till he lost his balance and slid over on his head . . .

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Then he lost his temper and tried bullying the thing. The bicycle, I was glad to see, showed spirit; and the subsequent proceedings degenerated into little else than a rough-and-tumble fight between him and the machine. One moment the bicycle would be on the gravel path, and he on top of it; the next, the position would be reversed—he on the gravel path, the bicycle on him. Now he would be standing flushed with victory, the bicycle firmly fixed between his legs. But his triumph would be short-lived. By a sudden, quick movement it would free itself, and, turning upon him, hit him sharply over the head with one of its handles.

At a quarter to one, dirty, and dishevelled, cut and bleeding, he said, " I think that will do, " and rose and wiped his brow.

The bicycle looked as if it also had had enough of it. Which had received most punishment it would have been difficult to say . . .

JEROME K. JEROME, *Three Men on the Bummel*

Downright !

When Monsieur Hervé, another ardent Royalist and member of the French Academy, took his first bicycling lesson and the instructor told him to lean more to the left, he refused to obey. The machine began to slant at an angle. " You'll fall unless you lean to the left, monsieur! " shouted the instructor. " Jamais de la vie! " Hervé shouted back. The bicycle went into a few convulsive gyrations and as it crashed, Hervé cried out, " Vive le Roi! "

CORNELIA OTIS SKINNER, *Elegant Wits and Grand Horizontals*

Sovereign Remedy

" One day," Bony began, " I was walking the high road when a gentleman on a bicycle ran into me, knocking me down and throwing himself into the hedge. It did me no harm at all, for I was soon on my feet and going to his assistance. All my consideration was for him, thinking that he might be seriously hurt. To my surprise he was not, though much shaken. After he had sufficiently recovered his breath he looked towards me and said, " Are you hurt, my poor man? " Quick as a flash it occurred to me that I was, and I began to limp painfully. " How far are you going? " he said. I mentioned a town four miles away . . . " Are you sure that you can walk there without assistance? " he asked. " Yes," I said, " by taking my time." " I am very sorry for you," said he, " and if this can be of help you are heartily welcome to it "—with that he placed in my hand a gold half-sovereign."

W. H. DAVIES, *The Adventures of Johnny Walker, Tramp*

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A Motorist's Nightmare

He shoved everything into the bag, hung it on his bicycle, and rode off full-tilt, mangling the corner of a flowerbed. At the gatehouse, he suddenly braked, then started off again—pedalling frantically, with the bag thumping against his knees. At the first bend of the lane he turned his head sharply and shouted, " Good-bye "—very nearly falling off the bicycle. Then he was gone . . .

DODIE SMITH, *I Capture the Castle*

Look Out !

At half past two the contingent were assembled on the road outside the laurel hedge. There seemed to P. Frankau's eyes at least, a fleet of bicycles. Her own allotted property did not reassure her. She balanced it awkwardly; the pedals inflicted a scratch upon her leg; the handlebars were widely branching; she pinched the tyres as the others were pinching their tyres. She had asked the younger Richmond to ride as her partner; the younger Richmond (E.) accepted gloomily; numbers were even and the remainder of the party was paired . . . For a few minutes she cycled cheerfully, a yard or two from the next back wheel. E. Richmond said, " I say, you do wobble." The moving surface of the road made patterns. The party turned left-handed and away from the town.

" Look out, old wobbly," said E. Richmond. " Coming up on your right." She went ahead. No matter . . .

The leaders, H. Eaton and B. Bond, now drew level with the leaders of the walking line. So, in due course, did P. Frankau. Exactly halfway down the rank, with all eyes upon her, she hurried a little. Her front wheel scraped E. Richmond's back wheel; she said, " Look out," in a gruff voice and fell with her bicycle. E. Richmond remained aloft.

Lying flat in the road, one wheel revolving below her stomach, P. Frankau wished for death . . . Miss Gillies said coldly, " You don't seem to be very good on a bicycle, do you? "

PAMELA FRANKAU, *I Find Four People*

Optimistic Foot-note

Daisy Daisy, give me your answer, do!
I'm half crazy all for the love of you!
It won't be a stylish marriage,
I can't afford a carriage,
But you'll look sweet upon the seat
Of a bicycle built for two.

HARRY DACRE, *Daisy Bell*, 1892

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Things looked somewhat fishy . . .

DIPTYCH

BY A. J. ALLAN

I WAS once invited to be the guest of a literary society at their annual dinner. You can laugh if you like, but it's perfectly true. I wrote back to the secretary and complained. I said, What do you mean by asking me to this dinner? How dare you? and all that, and he said he was very sorry but they always did have a guest each year, and it was my turn. So there was no way out of it, and I went.

What's more—er—which is more, I made a speech. At least, when I say I made a speech—I told three stories which my grandfather told me, and they passed as new; so it was all very satisfactory and cheerful, and it went on, I suppose, to about half past ten.

As I came out of the room where we'd dined into the corridor, a man came up to me and said, " It is Mr. Allan, isn't it? " and I said it was. Then he said, " I'm afraid you don't remember me. My name's Bacci. We once met at the BBC."

I didn't remember him, as a matter of fact. But really one meets such a lot of people at the BBC in one way and another that there was nothing in that. Not that I forget people as a rule.

Anyway, I said, " Of course, yes,"—as one does—and then he insisted on standing me a drink. I didn't want it in the least, but it would have looked a little unfriendly to refuse.

So we went down to a little lounge there is on the ground floor and had the drink.

This man Bacci was an Italian, of course. He'd travelled a good deal, and was quite interesting to listen to, but I wanted to get home. I suggested the other half of the whisky and soda, but he wouldn't have it, and then we both agreed that it was time to make a move.

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He'd got his car outside, and he offered me a lift—which way was I going? I told him where I lived and he said his place was in Campden Hill, so it fitted in quite well and we started off.

On the way, he asked me if I was at all interested in antiques. I told him that I liked old oak, but didn't know much about anything else. (I don't really know much about old oak.)

He said, "Well, I've just got hold of an old snuff-box I'd rather like you to see. Could you spare a minute to come and look at it?"

I naturally couldn't say no, so we called in at his place. It was a small house in one of those steep turnings on the left, as you go down Holland Park Avenue. We went in and he took me upstairs into the drawing-room. There he introduced me to a perfectly good wife, and we talked for two or three minutes.

While we talked, I looked round the room, and noticed that it was somewhat expensively furnished in Empire style. The pieces were well matched and the general effect was good, but Empire stuff doesn't happen to appeal to me.

Then Bacci said, "This is what I wanted to show you," and he went across to a little specimen table in the corner—you know, one of those glass-topped things on legs that people keep medals in.

There were several snuff-boxes in it, and he lifted the glass lid and took one out. It certainly was extremely handsome, and he said he'd been given to understand that it was worth a lot of money. What did I think about it?

I told him I thought it was very fine, and so on, but that I hadn't the vaguest idea what it might be worth.

He was a bit disappointed about that—did I know anyone who was a judge of such things? And for the moment I couldn't think of anyone. You never can. I said, Why, do you want to sell it? and he said, Well, as it happens, I do, and he explained why.

At that time the big Wall Street slump was just beginning, and a lot of their money was in American stocks. They were having to cable out fresh cover every day, and it was the very devil. (He spoke perfect English.) I felt rather sorry for him, being in a hole like that, and I finally managed to remember that I did know an art dealer. Two, in fact; father and son. They'd got a place in a back street, near Pall Mall. The kind of place with one dirty old vase in the window and a turnover of about a million a year. I shan't tell you who they are, but

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the son's Christian name is Isidore—at least his first name is Isidore. His friends call him Izzy.

At all events, I offered to give Bacci an introduction to Izzy if that was any use. He said, " Thank you very much, but why not bring him along to dinner? We shall be delighted, and you can fix any day you like next week."

It's not too easy to parry a general invitation like that, so I said I'd see what could be done and let him know, and soon after that he ran me home.

Well, next morning I what they call approached Izzy on the telephone, and asked him what he thought. He said at once that they didn't do much in the snuff-box line; pictures were more their strong suit, but he'd certainly come and give an opinion on this one, if I liked.

By the way, I was quite definite on the subject of Bacci. I said, " I don't know anything about the feller, he seems a decent sort and all the rest of it," but that was all I could say.

I purposely didn't mention Wall Street.

Anyhow, it was arranged that he and I should dine with the Baccis on the following Monday, at a quarter to eight, which we did.

It so happened that we both arrived on the doorstep at the same instant, and the parlour-maid gave us an apologetic message to the effect that Mr. and Mrs. Bacci had only just come in and weren't down yet, and would we excuse dinner being a few minutes late? We said we would, and she showed us up to the drawing-room. There were cocktails and things about.

While we were waiting we had a look at the snuff-box. Izzy didn't think an awful lot of it. He said it was quite good of its kind, but it was only Napoleon and not worth more than fifty or sixty pounds, and we put it back in its place.

Just as we were carefully shutting down the lid of the glass table Izzy started to say something, and then stopped in the middle. I looked up to see what was the matter and found him staring at a pair of pictures on the wall straight in front of us. He didn't make any remark, but merely wandered off round the room.

The pictures certainly were rum-looking—quite enough to make anyone stare. They were about eight inches square and apparently painted on wood. The left-hand one was so dark and worm-eaten that I couldn't make it out at all, but the right-hand one wasn't so bad.

It was evidently meant to portray the incident of Jacob's

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Dream. There was Jacob, in the foreground, fast asleep, and farther back there was a ladder leaning up against a cloud with lots of angels going up and down it.

The angels weren't like any I've ever seen and neither was the Jacob's Ladder. I was just going to ask Izzy about it, but the Baccis came in. They were frightfully sorry to be late, but they'd somehow made a mistake in the time.

I don't think anything of interest happened during dinner, except that Izzy went out of his way to be particularly civil.

Afterwards the snuff-box was trotted out again, and Izzy told Bacci exactly what he'd told me—namely, that it wasn't worth more than sixty pounds at the outside.

Then they both happened to look at the two dirty old pictures, and Bacci said what a pity it was they weren't genuine. He told us how he'd picked them up in an old shop in Milan for a hundred lire. A hundred lire (in those days) was roughly twenty-two bob. I wouldn't have given tuppence for them, but Izzy seemed to think they were rather quaint.

Then we started talking about something else—theatres, I think—yes, it was theatres. Izzy said his father had the stage box for *Going Up* for the next evening but one—that is, Wednesday. Would we all like to dine with them somewhere and go? The others were all for it, but I rather hung back. You know how sometimes people have to ask you because you are there and they can't leave you out. Anyway, I gave him the chance, but he went on being pressing, so I said I would.

Mind you, I shouldn't have gone even then, only I was beginning to get curious. I mean, it was all so utterly unlike Izzy. It even crossed my mind that he might have conceived a sudden passion for Madame—not to say Signora—Bacci, but I looked at her again and decided no, he must have just turned generous.

He was being princely, and no mistake. He wouldn't hear of us meeting at the restaurant. Rather not. I was to be at the Baccis' at seven-fifteen and he and his father, whose name was Ikey, would call for us in their car.

Very well, then. On the Wednesday evening I again scaled the heights of Campden Hill and presented myself at the proper time—in other words, a quarter past seven.

There was a car about as big as a char-à-banc outside, blocking up the road, so Ikey and Izzy had already arrived.

I rang the bell and the parlour-maid took me upstairs, and on the way she again apologised for the fact that Mr. and Mrs. Bacci would be a few minutes late. Then she opened the drawing-room door and I went in.

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Izzy and his pa were standing over by the snuff-box table, but when they saw me they sort of edged away. They needn't have done—the lid was shut—but it drew my attention to them, and I noticed that Izzy was just finishing a cigarette.

Now it isn't usual to walk into other people's houses smoking, so it looked as though they'd been there some little time, and I said, "I hope I'm not late," but Ikey said, oh no, it was his fault—he'd thought Izzy had said seven instead of a quarter past, so they'd been looking at all the pretty things.

The Baccis blew in. They thought the time had been fixed for half past seven instead of a quarter past. I remember thinking, This is a funny house. No one ever turns up at the proper time except me.

Anyway, we finally did get off, and we spent a very pleasant and costly evening.

After the theatre the Baccis suggested our going back to their place for a few minutes, which we did—and when drinks had been handed round, the subject of Wall Street somehow managed to crop up. The slump was at its very worst by this time, and Bacci said it was affecting him pretty badly.

He told us that for a year or two they'd been spending part of their time in Italy and part in England. They'd originally taken this house furnished, with the idea of replacing the furniture by degrees with really good things. They hadn't hurried, and this room was the only one they'd actually—well, which had nothing but their own stuff in it. But affairs had got so perfectly—er—foul, owing to this Wall Street business that they'd decided to sell the room as it stood—as it were—and go back to Italy. Did Ikey know anyone who'd like to buy it?

Well, Ikey looked at Izzy, and Izzy looked at Ikey, and they thought they might perhaps be able to find a purchaser, provided the price was moderate. What sort of figure did Mr. Bacci put on it? And what do you think he said? Six thousand pounds!

I naturally thought he was joking. If he'd said six hundred I should have thought it a bit stiff, but six thousand was too utterly wild for anything.

I expected howls of derision from the art dealers, but there weren't any. They just sat perfectly still like a couple of overfed gargoyles, and finally Ikey murmured something about two thousand pounds being rather nearer the value.

Well, that settled it. Either they were all mad or else there was something wrong with the whisky, although it tasted all right.

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Before you could say knife they'd started a proper haggling match, and it went on and on. For all it meant to me, it might have been a piano concerto by Bartok. No, it wasn't as bad as that, but it wasn't comfortable. I simply hate having my chair sold from under me, and that's what it amounted to.

The only thing that was quite clear was that Ikey and Izzy wanted this precious furniture for themselves. You'd have thought they'd have wiped the floor with Bacci when it came to bargaining, and so they would if he'd pretended to know anything about antiques. But he didn't. He merely kept on saying how much he'd paid for everything, and he wouldn't come down anything to speak of.

However, at the end of half an hour he suddenly gave way. He said, " Look here, gentlemen, what about splitting the difference? For an immediate cash sale I will take four thousand pounds."

Ikey said, " Right, you can have a cheque tomorrow if you like."

But Bacci didn't want that at all—at least, he didn't want a cheque. It wasn't that he didn't trust them, but there was some slight trouble with his bank. He was a bit chary of paying anything in, in case he couldn't get it out again. Also he was leaving for Italy fairly soon. Would they mind letting him have the money in cash?

Well, I'm not more suspicious than most people, but you must admit that this made things look somewhat fishy. One would have thought that a couple of art dealers would have taken fright at once. But they didn't in the least. They agreed to hand over this four thousand pounds at their office the next day but one—in other words, Friday.

The only glimmering of caution they showed was to ask if one of their clerks could come along next day and make a list of the stuff. Bacci said, " Certainly," and that was that. The party broke up and I was left wondering precisely what form the swindle was going to take.

It was my turn to do some entertaining, so I asked them all to lunch at my club after the deal was through, and they said they would. But it was all most disappointing. The paying-over ceremony passed off without a hitch. No one was fetched out to the telephone and the notes didn't vanish, except into Bacci's pocket.

Lunch was quite jolly. It was also rather embarrassing, because Bacci would thank me for my share in the business—introducing him to Izzy and so on, and then he suggested my

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having some little thing as a souvenir. Did Ikey mind my choosing one of the snuff-boxes? I said I didn't take snuff, but they all seemed to wish it, so I could only accept gracefully and thank them very much.

Now let's see—what happened next? Oh, yes. After lunch the Baccis said they were going to a matinée, so they rather hurried off. And when they'd gone Izzy said he and Pa were thinking of running up to Campden Hill. What about me coming too, and choosing my snuff-box? So we all went.

The door was opened by the inventory clerk. He said, "I suppose you know they've cleared out."

Ikey said, "Cleared out? Nonsense, we've only just had lunch with them."

So the man said, "Well, they have gone, and taken all their luggage. The servants have gone, too."

This rather shook Messrs. Ikey and Company. They both asked, "Is the stuff all right?" But apparently it was. The man had just checked it over with his list.

All the same, they charged upstairs into the drawing-room as fast as they could. So did I. They never even looked at the furniture. They simply tore across the room to those mouldy old pictures. You know, Jacob's Ladder and the other one. They yanked 'em off the wall and took 'em to the light—and then the balloon went up! There was a yell. "These are copies!"

I said, "Of course they are copies, I heard Bacci say so."

Then Ikey literally shouted, "But they weren't copies, I tell you. They were genuine. A real genuine diptych."

I said, "What's a diptych, anyway?" Then they explained.

Not very easy to understand, because they were fairly spluttering with rage, but I gathered that a diptych consists of two wooden panels hinged together with paintings on them. The subjects are nearly always Biblical. The panels are often taken apart and framed separately, as these were. Another point, not without interest, is that a genuine diptych by a good fourteenth-century artist is worth anything up to five thousand pounds. However, that's rather by the way. I was still not quite clear what had happened. So I asked them.

I said, "Are you absolutely certain that they aren't the same ones you saw the other night?"

They said, "Of course we are certain. Do you think we are such something, something fools as to give four thousand pounds for a whole lot of imitation Empire junk in order to get hold of a forged diptych?"

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I told 'em I shouldn't have thought it unless I'd actually seen 'em do it.

That didn't help matters at all. They stamped up and down the room fuming, and I got quite worried about the old man. He'd one of those short, thick necks, and he went rather a funny colour, but he cooled down a bit, and then Izzy remarked, in a thoughtful kind of way, "All the same, I think these ought to be good enough for Milligan. Especially if we show him the analyst's report."

Oh, yes, I ought to tell you. The evening they'd turned up early to get a private view of the pictures they'd evidently gone and scraped off a bit of paint. They'd had this chemically examined to make quite sure. Personally, I thought that real experts scorned such artificial aids, but perhaps it's different when they are buying on their own account.

I asked who this man Milligan was, and they told me he was an American collector who went in solely for fourteenth-century Italian work. He was over in England for a holiday, and he'd called at their place a week or so before. Among other things, he'd said that he was ready to buy any genuine diptych they might know of, provided it had a decent pedigree, but he preferred one which hadn't been hawked about a lot. He was prepared to pay, and this was rather important, twenty thousand pounds—I will repeat that—twenty thousand pounds, if he came across what he wanted.

Mind you, it seems almost incredibly vulgar that anyone should offer a fancy price like that, but it quite often happens. Why I, even I, was once offered ten thousand dollars (however much that may be), merely to go over to New York and deliver two lectures. I didn't go, but it does show the sort of thing they'll do, and I'm not an oil-painting.

At any rate, as you can quite see, this entirely genuine diptych of Bacci's completely filled the bill and they'd gone all out to get it, and now that they'd been tricked into buying an excellent but quite worthless copy of it, they were calmly proposing to pass it on to the wretched Milligan as genuine.

I said to Ikey, "You can't do that, it wouldn't be honest," and he said, "Vot you mean—honest—and ain't it just vot he asked us to find?"

Then I saw daylight. I said, "Where's Milligan staying?" and they told me, some hotel.

So I said, "You just ring up and see if he's there."

And they did, but he wasn't. He'd gone abroad, presumably with Bacci.

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Blind panic—and he started to run

FIRST OFFENCE

BY EVAN HUNTER

HE sat in the police van with the collar of his leather jacket turned up, the bright silver studs sharp against the otherwise unrelieved black.

He was seventeen years old, and he wore his hair in a high black crown. He carried his head high and erect because he knew he had a good profile, and he carried his mouth like a flick knife, ready to spring open at the slightest provocation. His hands were thrust deep into his jacket pockets, and his grey eyes reflected the walls of the van. There was excitement in his eyes too, an almost holiday excitement. He tried to tell himself he was in trouble, but he couldn't quite believe it. His gradual descent to disbelief had been a spiral that had spun dizzily through the range of his emotions. Terror when the cop's flash had picked him out; blind panic when he'd started to run; rebellion when the cop's firm hand had closed around the leather sleeve of his jacket; sullen resignation when the cop had thrown him into the RMP car; and then cocky stubbornness when they'd booked him at the police station.

The desk sergeant had looked him over curiously, with a strange aloofness in his Irish eyes.

"What's the matter, Fatty?" he'd asked.

The sergeant stared at him implacably. "Put him away for the night," the sergeant said.

He'd slept overnight in the precinct cell block, and he'd awakened with this strange excitement pulsing through his narrow body, and it was the excitement that had caused his disbelief. Trouble, hell! He'd been in trouble before, but it had never felt like this. This was different. This was a ball, man. This was like being initiated into a secret society some place.

His contempt for the police had grown when they refused him

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the opportunity to shave after breakfast. He was only seventeen, but he had a fairly decent beard, and a man should be allowed to shave in the morning, what the hell! But even the beard had somehow lent to the unreality of the situation, made him appear—in his own eyes—somehow more desperate, more sinister-looking. He knew he was in trouble, but the trouble was glamorous, and he surrounded it with the gossamer lie of make-believe. He was living the story-book legend. He was big-time now. They'd caught him and booked him, and he should have been scared but he was excited instead.

There was one other person in the van with him, a guy who'd spent the night in the cell block too. The guy was an obvious bum, and his breath stank of cheap wine, but he was better than nobody to talk to. "Hey!" he said.

The bum looked up. "You talking to me?"

"Yeah. Where we going?"

"The line-up kid," the bum said. "This your first offence?"

"This is the first time I got caught," he answered cockily.

"All felonies go to the line-up," the bum told him. "And also some special types of misdemeanours. You commit a felony?"

"Yeah," he said, hoping he sounded nonchalant. What'd they have this bum in for anyway? Sleeping on a park bench?

"Well, that's why you're goin' to the line-up. They have guys from every detective squad in the city there, to look you over. So they'll remember you next time. They put you on a stage, and they read off the offence, and the Chief of Detectives starts firing questions at you. What's your name, kid?"

"What's it to you?"

"Don't get smart, punk, or I'll break your arm," the bum said.

He looked at the bum curiously. He was a pretty big guy, with a heavy growth of beard and powerful shoulders. "My name's Stevie," he said.

"I'm Jim Skinner," the bum said. "When somebody's trying to give you advice, don't go hip on him."

"Yeah. Well what's your advice?" he asked, not wanting to back down completely.

"When they get you up there, you don't have to answer anything. They'll throw questions, but you don't have to answer. Did you make a statement at the scene?"

"No," he answered.

"Good. Then don't make no statement now either. They can't force you to. Just keep your mouth shut, and don't tell them nothing."

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" I ain't afraid. They know all about it anyway," Stevie said.

The bum shrugged and gathered around him the sullen pearls of his scattered wisdom. Stevie sat in the van whistling, listening to the accompanying hum of the tyres, hearing the secret hum of his blood beneath the other louder sound. He sat at the core of a self-imposed importance, basking in its warm glow, whistling contentedly, secretly happy. Beside him, Skinner leaned back against the wall of the van.

When they arrived at the Centre Street Headquarters, they put them in detention cells, awaiting the line-up which began at nine. At ten minutes to nine they led him out of his cell, and the cop who'd arrested him originally took him into the special prisoner's elevator.

" How's it feel being an elevator boy? " he asked the cop.

The cop didn't answer him. They went upstairs to the big room where the line-up was being held. A detective in front of them was pinning on his shield so he could get past the cop at the desk. They crossed the large gymnasium-like compartment, walking past the men sitting in folded chairs before the stage.

" Get a nice turnout, don't you? " Stevie said.

" You ever tried vaudeville? " the cop answered.

The blinds in the room had not been drawn yet, and Stevie could see everything clearly—the stage itself with the permanently fixed microphone hanging from a narrow metal tube above; the height markers—four feet, five feet, six feet—behind the mike on the wide white wall. The men in the seats, he knew, were all detectives and his sense of importance suddenly flared again when he realised these bulls had come from all over the city just to look at him. Behind the bulls was a raised platform with a sort of lecturer's stand on it. A microphone rested on the stand, and a chair was behind it, and he assumed this was where the Chief bull would sit. There were uniformed cops stationed here and there around the room, and there was one man in civilian clothing who sat at a desk in front of the stage.

" Who's that? " Stevie asked the cop.

" Police stenographer," the cop answered. " He's going to take down your words for posterity."

They walked behind the stage, and Stevie watched as other felony offenders from all over the city joined them. There was one woman, but all the rest were men, and he studied their faces carefully, hoping to pick up some tricks from them, hoping to learn the subtlety of their expressions. They didn't look much. He was better-looking than all of them, and the knowledge

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pleased him. He'd be the star of this little shindig. The cop who'd been with him moved over to talk to a big broad who was obviously a policewoman. Stevie looked around, spotted Skinner and walked over to him.

"What happens now?" he asked.

"They're gonna pull the shades in a few minutes," Skinner said. "Then they'll turn on the spots and start the line-up. The spots won't blind you, but you won't be able to see the faces of any of the bulls out there."

"Who wants to see them mugs?" Stevie asked.

Skinner shrugged. "When your case is called, your arresting officer goes back and stands near the Chief of Detectives, just in case the Chief needs more dope from him. The Chief'll read off your name and the borough where you was pinched. A number'll follow the borough. Like he'll say 'Manhattan one' or 'Manhattan two.' That's just the number of the case from that borough. You're just the number of the case from that borough. You're first—you get number one, you follow?"

"Yeah," Stevie said.

"He'll tell the bulls what they got on you, and then he'll say either 'Statement' or 'No statement.' If you made a statement, chances are he won't ask many questions 'cause he won't want you to contradict anything damaging you already said. If there's no statement he'll fire questions like a machine-gun. But you don't have to answer nothing."

"Then what?"

"When he's through, you go downstairs to get mugged and printed. Then they take you over to the Criminal Courts Building for arraignment."

"They're gonna take my picture, huh?" Stevie asked.

"Yeah."

"You think there'll be reporters here?"

"Huh?"

"Reporters."

"Oh. Maybe. All the wire services hang out in a room across the street from where the vans pulled up. They got their own police radio in there, and they get the straight dope as soon as it's happening, in case they want to roll with it. There may be some reporters." Skinner paused. "Why? What'd you do?"

"It ain't much what I done," Stevie said. "I was just wonderin' if we'd make the papers."

Skinner stared at him curiously. "You're all charged up, ain't you Stevie?"

"Hell, no! Don't you think I know I'm in trouble?"

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"Maybe you don't know just how much trouble," Skinner said.

"What the hell are you talking about?"

"This ain't as exciting as you think, kid. Take my word for it."

"Sure, you know all about it."

"I been around a little," Skinner said dryly.

"Sure, on park benches all over the country. I know I'm in trouble, don't worry."

"You kill anybody?"

"No," Stevie said.

"Assault?"

Stevie didn't answer.

"Whatever you done," Skinner advised, "and no matter how long you been doin' it before they caught you, make like it's your first time. Tell them you done it, and then say you don't know why you done it, and you'll never do it again. It might help you kid. You might get off with a suspended sentence."

"Yeah?"

"Sure. And then keep your nose clean afterwards, and you'll be O.K."

"Keep my nose clean! Don't make me laugh, pal."

Skinner clutched Stevie's arm in a tight grip. "Kid, don't be a damn fool. If you can get out, get out now! I coulda got out a hundred times, and I'm still with it, and it's no picnic. Get out before you get started."

Stevie shook off Skinner's hand. "Come on, willya?" he said, annoyed.

"Knock it off there," the cop said. "We're ready to start."

"Take a look at your neighbours, kid," Skinner whispered. "Take a hard look. And then get out of it while you still can."

Stevie grimaced and turned away from Skinner. Skinner whirled round to face him again, and there was a pleading desperation on the unshaven face, a mute reaching in the red-rimmed eyes before he spoke again. "Kid," he said, "listen to me. Take my advice, I've been . . ."

"*Knock it off!*" the cop warned.

He was suddenly aware of the fact that the shades had been drawn and the room was dim. It was very quiet out there, and he hoped they would take him first. The excitement had risen to an almost fever pitch inside him, and he couldn't wait to get on that stage. What the hell was Skinner talking about, anyway? "Take a look at your neighbours, kid." The poor jerk

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probably had a wet brain. What the hell did the police bother with old drunks for, anyway?

A uniformed cop led one of the men from behind the stage, and Stevie moved a little to his left, so that he could see the stage, hoping none of the cops would shove him back where he wouldn't have a good view. His cop and the policewoman were still talking, paying no attention to him. He smiled, unaware that the smile developed as a smirk, and watched the first man mounting the steps to the stage.

The man's eyes were very small, and he kept blinking them . . . blinking them. He was bald at the back of his head, and he was wearing a Navy peacoat and dark tweed trousers, and his eyes were red-rimmed and sleepy-looking. He reached to the five-foot-six-inches marker on the wall behind him, and he stared out at the bulls, blinking.

" Assisi," the Chief of Detectives said, " Augustus, Manhattan one. Thirty-three years old. Picked up in a bar on 43rd and Broadway, carrying a .45 Colt automatic. No statement. How about it, Gus ? "

" How about what? " Assisi asked.

" Were you carrying a gun? "

" Yes, I was carrying a gun." Assisi seemed to realise his shoulders were slumped. He pulled them back suddenly, standing erect.

" Where, Gus? "

" In my pocket."

" What were you doing with the gun, Gus? "

" I was just carrying it."

" Why? "

" Listen, I'm not going to answer any questions," Assisi said. " You're gonna put me through a third-degree. I ain't answering nothing. I want a lawyer."

" You'll get plenty of opportunity to have a lawyer," the Chief of Detectives said. " And nobody's giving you a third-degree. We just want to know what you were doing with a gun. You know that's against the law, don't you ?"

" I've got a permit for the gun," Assisi said.

" We checked with Permits, and they say no. This is a Navy gun, isn't it? "

" Yeah."

" What? "

" I said yeah, it's a Navy gun."

" What were you doing with it? Why were you carrying it around? "

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" I like guns."
" Why? "
" Why what? Why do I like guns? Because . . . "
" Why were you carrying it around? "
" I don't know."
" Well, you must have a reason for carrying a loaded .45. The gun was loaded, wasn't it? "
" Yeah, it was loaded."
" You have any other guns? "
" No."
" We found a .38 in your room. How about that one? "
" It's no good."
" What ? "
" The .38."
" What do you mean, no good? "
" The firin' mechanism is busted."
" You want a gun that works, is that it? "
" I didn't say that."
" You said the .38's no good because it won't fire, didn't you? "
" Well what good's a gun that won't fire? "
" Why do you need a gun that fires? "
" I was just carrying it. I didn't shoot anybody, did I? "
" No, you didn't. Were you planning on shooting somebody? "
" Sure," Assisi said, " That's just what I was planning."
" Who? "
" I don't know," Assisi said sarcastically, " Anybody. The first guy I saw, all right? Everybody, all right? I was planning a wholesale murder."
" Not murder, maybe, but a little larceny, huh? "
" Murder," Assisi insisted, in his stride now. " I was just going to shoot up the whole town. O.K.? You happy now? "
" Where'd you get the gun? "
" In the Navy."
" Where? "
" From my ship."
" It's a stolen gun? "
" No, I found it."
" You stole government property, is that it? "
" I found it."
" When'd you get out of the Navy? "
" Three months ago."
" You worked since? "
" No."
" Where were you discharged? "

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" Pensacola."

" Is that where you stole the gun? "

" I didn't steal it."

" Why'd you leave the Navy? "

Assisi hesitated for a long time.

" Why'd you leave the Navy? " the Chief of Detectives asked again.

" They kicked me out! " Assisi snapped.

" Why? "

" I was undesirable! " he shouted.

" Why? "

Assisi did not answer.

" *Why?* "

There was silence in the darkened room. Stevie watched Assisi's face, the twitching mouth, the blinking eyelids.

" Next case," the Chief of Detectives said.

Stevie watched as Assisi walked across the stage and down the steps on the other side, where the uniformed cop met him. He'd handled himself well, Assisi had. They'd rattled him a little at the end there, but on the whole he's done a good job. So the guy was lugging a gun around. So what? He was right, wasn't he? He didn't shoot nobody, so what was all the fuss about? Cops! They had nothing else to do, they went around hauling in guys who were carrying guns. Poor bastard was a veteran, too; that was really rubbing it in. But he did a good job up there, even though he was nervous, you could see he was very nervous.

A man and a woman walked past him and on to the stage. The man was very tall, topping the six-foot marker. The woman was shorter, a bleached blonde turning to fat.

" They picked them up together," Skinner whispered. " So they show them together. They figure a pair'll always work as a pair, usually."

" How'd you like that Assisi?" Stevie whispered back. " He really had them bulls on the run, didn't he? "

Skinner didn't answer. The Chief of Detectives cleared his throat.

" MacGregor, Peter, aged forty-five, and Anderson, Marcia, aged forty-two, Bronx one. Got them in a parked car on the Grand Concourse. Back seat of the car was loaded with goods, including luggage, a typewriter, a portable sewing-machine and a fur coat. No statements. What about all that stuff, Pete? "

" It's mine."

" The fur coat too?"

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"No, that's Marcia's."

"You're not married, are you?"

"No."

"Living together?"

"Well, you know," Pete said.

"What about the stuff?" the Chief of Detectives said again.

"I told you," Pete said. "It's ours."

"What was it doing in the car?"

"Oh. Well, we were . . . uh—" The man paused for a long time—"We were going on a trip."

"Where to?"

"Where? Oh. To . . . uh—" Again he paused, frowning, and Stevie smiled, thinking what a clown this guy was. This guy was better than a sideshow at Coney. This guy couldn't tell a lie without having to think about it for an hour. And the dumpy broad with him was a hot sketch, too. This act alone was worth the price of admission.

"Uh . . ." Pete said, still fumbling for words. "Uh . . . we were going to—uh . . . Denver."

"What for?"

"Oh, just a little pleasure trip, you know," he said, attempting a smile.

"How much money were you carrying when we picked you up?"

"Forty dollars."

"You were going to Denver on forty dollars?"

"Well, it was fifty dollars. Yeah, it was more like fifty dollars."

"Come on, Pete, what were you doing with all that stuff in the car?"

"I told you. We were taking a trip."

"With a sewing-machine, huh? You do a lot of sewing, Pete?"

"Marcia does."

"That right, Marcia?"

The blonde spoke in a high, reedy voice. "Yeah, I do a lot of sewing."

"That fur coat, Marcia. Is it yours?"

"Sure."

"It has the initials G.D. on the lining. Those aren't your initials, are they, Marcia?"

"No."

"Whose are they?"

"Search me. We bought that coat in a hock shop."

"Where?"

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"Myrtle Avenue, Brooklyn. You know where that is?"

"Yes, I know where it is. What about that luggage? It had initials on it too. And they weren't yours or Pete's. How about it?"

"We got that in a hock shop too."

"And the typewriter?"

"That's Pete's."

"Are you a typist, Pete?"

"Well, I fool around a little, you know."

"We're going to check all this stuff against our Stolen Goods list; you know that, don't you?"

"We got all that stuff in hock shops," Pete said. "If it's stolen, we don't know nothing about it."

"Were you going to Denver with him, Marcia?"

"Oh, sure."

"When did you both decide to go? A few minutes ago?"

"We decided last week sometime."

"Were you going to Denver by way of the Grand Concourse?"

"Huh?" Pete said.

"Your car was parked on the Grand Concourse. What were you doing there with a car load of stolen goods?"

"It wasn't stolen," Pete said.

"We were on our way to Yonkers," the woman said.

"I thought you were going to Denver."

"Yeah, but we had to get the car fixed first. There was something wrong with the . . ." She paused, turning to Pete. "What was it, Pete? That thing that was wrong?"

Pete waited a long time before answering. "Uh—the—uh . . . the flywheel, yeah. There's a garage up in Yonkers fixes them good, we heard. Flywheels, I mean."

"If you were going to Yonkers, why were you parked on the Concourse?"

"Well, we were having an argument."

"What kind of an argument?"

"Not an argument, really. Just a discussion, sort of."

"What about?"

"About what to eat."

"What!"

"About what to eat. I wanted to eat at the Chink's, but Marcia wanted a glass of milk and a piece of pie. So we were trying to decide whether we should go to the Chink's or the cafeteria. That's why we were parked on the Concourse."

"We found a wallet in your coat, Pete. It wasn't yours, was it?"

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" No."

" Whose was it? "

" I don't know." He paused, then added hastily, " There wasn't no money in it."

" No, but there was identification. A Mr. Simon Granger. Where'd you get it, Pete? "

" I found it in the subway. There wasn't no money in it."

" Did you find all that other stuff in the subway, too? "

" No, sir, I bought that." He paused. " I was going to return the wallet, but I forgot to stick it in the mail."

" Too busy planning for the Denver trip, huh? "

" Yeah, I guess so."

" When's the last time you earned an honest dollar, Pete? "

Pete grinned. " Oh, about two or three years ago, I guess."

" Here're their records," the Chief of Detectives said. " Marcia, 1938, Sullivan Law; 1939, Concealing Birth of Issue; 1940, Possession of Narcotics—you still on the stuff, Marcia? "

" No."

" 1942, dis. cond; 1943, Narcotics again; 1947—you had enough, Marcia? "

Marcia didn't answer.

" Pete," the Chief of Detectives said, " 1940, Attempted Rape; 1941, Selective Service Act; 1942, dis. cond; 1943, Attempted Burglary; 1945, Living on Proceeds of Prostitution; 1947, Assault and Battery, did two years at Ossining."

" I never did no time," Pete said.

" According to this, you did."

" I never done no time," he insisted.

" 1950," the Chief of Detectives went on, " Carnal Abuse of a Child." He paused. " Want to tell us about that one, Pete? "

" I—uh . . . " Pete swallowed. " I got nothing to say."

" You're ashamed of *some* things, that it? "

Pete didn't answer.

" Get them out of here," the Chief of Detectives said.

" See how long he kept them up there? " Skinner whispered. " He knows what they are, wants every bull in the city to recognise them if they . . . "

" Come on," a detective said, taking Skinner's arm.

Stevie watched as Skinner climbed the steps to the stage. Those two had really been something, all right. And just looking at them, you'd never know they were such operators. You'd never know they . . .

" Skinner, James, Manhattan two. Aged fifty-one. Threw a garbage can through the plate-glass window of a clothing shop

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on Third Avenue. Arresting officer found him inside the shop with a bundle of overcoats. No statement. That right, James? "

"I don't remember," Skinner said.

"Is it, or isn't it? "

"All I remember is waking up in jail this morning."

"You don't remember throwing that ash can through the window? "

"No sir."

"You don't remember taking those overcoats."

"No, sir."

"Well, you must have done it, don't you think? The off-duty detective found you inside the store with the coats in your arms."

"I got only his word for that, sir."

"Well, his word is pretty good. Especially since he found you inside the store with your arms full of merchandise."

"I don't remember, sir."

"You've been here before, haven't you? "

"I don't remember, sir."

"What do you do for a living, James ?"

"I'm unemployed, sir."

"When's the last time you worked? "

"I don't remember, sir."

"You don't remember much of anything, do you? "

"I have a poor memory, sir."

"Maybe the record has a better memory than you, James," the Chief of Detectives said.

"Maybe so, sir. I couldn't say."

"I hardly know where to start, James. You haven't been exactly an ideal citizen."

"Haven't I, sir? "

"Here's as good a place as any. 1948, Assault and Robbery; 1949, Indecent Exposure; 1951, Burglary; 1952, Assault and Robbery again. You're quite a guy, aren't you, James? "

"If you say so, sir. "

"I say so. Now how about that store? "

"I don't remember anything about a store, sir."

"Why'd you break into it? "

"I don't remember breaking into any store, sir."

"Hey, what's this? " the Chief of Detectives said suddenly.

"Sir? "

"Maybe we should've started back a little further, huh, James? Here on your record: 1938, convicted of first degree murder, sentenced to execution."

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The assembled bulls began murmuring among themselves. Stevie leaned forward eagerly, anxious to get a better look at this bum who's offered him advice.

"What happened there, James?"

"What happened where, sir?"

"You were sentenced to death? How come you're still with us?"

"The case was appealed."

"And never retried?"

"No, sir."

"You're pretty lucky, aren't you?"

"I'm pretty unlucky, sir, if you ask me."

"Is that right? You cheat the chair, and you call that unlucky. Well, the law won't slip up this time."

"I don't know anything about law, sir."

"You don't, huh?"

"No, sir, I only know that if you want to get a police station into action, all you have to do is buy a cheap bottle of wine and drink it quiet, minding your own business."

"And that's what you did, huh, James?"

"That's what I did, sir."

"And you don't remember breaking into that store?"

"I don't remember anything."

"All right, next case."

Skinner turned his head slowly, and his eyes met Stevie's squarely. Again there was the same mute pleading in his eyes, and then he turned his head away and shuffled off the stage and down the steps into the darkness.

The cop's hand closed around Stevie's biceps. For an instant he didn't know what was happening, and then he realised his case was the next one. He shook off the cop's hand, squared his shoulders, lifted his head and began climbing the steps.

He felt taller all at once. He felt like an actor coming on after his cue. There was an aura of unreality about the stage and the darkened room beyond it, the bulls sitting in that room.

The Chief of Detectives was reading off the information about him, but he didn't hear it. He kept looking at the lights, which were not really so bright; they didn't blind him at all. Didn't they have brighter lights? Couldn't they put more lights on him, so they could see him when he told his story?

He tried to make out the faces of the detectives, but he couldn't see them clearly, and he was aware of the Chief of Detective's voice droning on and on, but he didn't hear what the man was saying, he heard only the hum of his voice. He glanced over his

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shoulder, trying to see how tall he was against the markers, and then he stood erect, his shoulders back, moving closer to the hanging microphone, wanting to be sure his voice was heard when he began speaking.

" . . . no statement," the Chief of Detectives concluded. There was a long pause, and Stevie waited, holding his breath. " This your first offence, Steve? " the Chief of Detectives asked.

" Don't you know? " Stevie asked.

" I'm asking you."

" Yeah, it's my first offence."

" You want to tell us all about it? "

" There's nothing to tell. You know the whole story anyway."

" Sure, but do you? "

" What are you talking about? "

" Tell us the story, Steve."

" Whatya makin' a big federal case out of a lousy stick-up for? Ain't you got nothing better to do with your time? "

" We've got plenty of time, Steve."

" Well, I'm in a hurry."

" You're not going any place, kid. Tell us about it."

" What's there to tell? There was a candy store stuck up, that's all."

" Did you stick it up? "

" That's for me to know and you to find out."

" We know you did."

" Then don't ask me stupid questions."

" Why'd you do it? "

" I ran out of butts."

" Come on, kid."

" I done it 'cause I wanted to."

" Why? "

" Look, you caught me cold, so let's get this over with, huh? Whatya wastin' time with me for? "

" We want to hear what you've got to say. Why'd you pick this particular candy store? "

" I just picked it. I put slips in a hat and picked this one out."

" You didn't really, did you, Steve? "

" No, I didn't really. I picked it 'cause there's an old crumb who runs it, and I figured it was a pushover."

" What time did you enter the store, Steve? "

" The old guy told you all this already, didn't he? Look, I know I'm up here so you can get a good look at me. All right, take your good look, and let's get it over with."

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" *What time Steve?* "

" I don't have to tell you nothing."

" Except that we know it already."

" Then why do you want to hear it again? Ten o'clock, all right? How does that fit? "

" A little early, isn't it? "

" How's eleven? Try that one for size."

" Let's make it twelve, and we'll be closer."

" Make it whatever you want to," Stevie said, pleased with the way he was handling this. They knew all about it anyway, so he might as well have himself a ball, show them they couldn't shove him around.

" You went into the store at twelve, is that right? "

" If you say so, Chief."

" Did you have a gun? "

" No."

" What then? "

" Nothing."

" Nothing at all? "

" Just me. I scared him with a dirty look, that's all."

" You had a flick knife, didn't you? "

" You found one on me, so why ask? "

" *Did you use the knife?* "

" No."

" You didn't tell the old man to open the cash register or you'd cut him up? Isn't that what you said? "

" I didn't make a tape recording of what I said."

" *But you did threaten him with the knife. You did force* him to open the cash register, holding the knife on him."

" I suppose so."

" How much money did you get? "

" You've got the dough. Why don't you count it? "

" We already have. *Twelve dollars; is that right?* "

" I didn't get a chance to count it. The Law showed."

" When did the Law show? "

" When I was leaving. Ask the cop who pinched me. He knows when."

" Something happened before you left, though."

" Nothing happened. I cleaned out the register and then blew; period."

" Your knife had blood on it."

" Yeah? I was cleaning chickens last night."

" You stabbed the owner of that store, didn't you? "

" Me? I never stabbed nobody in my whole life."

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"*Why'd you stab him?*"

"I didn't."

"*Where'd you stab him?*"

"I didn't stab him."

"Did he start yelling?"

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"You stabbed him, Steve. We know you did."

"You're full of crap."

"Don't get smart, Steve."

"Ain't you had your look yet? What the hell more do you want?"

"We want you to tell us why you stabbed the owner of that store."

"And I told you I didn't stab him."

"He was taken to the hospital last night with six knife-wounds in his chest and abdomen. Now how about that, Steve?"

"Save your questioning for the Detective Squad Room. I ain't saying another word."

"You had your money. Why'd you stab him?"

Stevie did not answer.

"Were you afraid?"

"Afraid of what?" Stevie answered defiantly.

"I don't know. Afraid he'd tell who held him up? Afraid he'd start yelling? What were you afraid of, kid?"

"I wasn't afraid of nothing. I told the old crumb to keep his mouth shut. He shoulda listened to me."

"He didn't keep his mouth shut?"

"Ask him."

"I'm asking you!"

"No, he didn't keep his mouth shut. He started yelling. Right after I'd cleaned out the drawer. The damn jerk, for a lousy twelve bucks he starts yelling."

"What'd you do?"

"I told him to shut up."

"And he didn't."

"No, he didn't. So I hit him, and he still kept yelling. So—I gave him the knife."

"Six times?"

"I don't know how many times. I just—gave it to him. He shouldn't have yelled. You ask him if I did any harm to him before that. Go ahead, ask him. He'll tell you. I didn't even touch the crumb before he started yelling. Go to the hospital and ask him if I touched him. Go ahead, ask him."

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" We can't, Steve."

" Wh . . . "

" He died this morning."

" He . . . " For a moment, Stevie could not think clearly. Died? Is that what he'd said? The room was curiously still now. It had been silently attentive before, but this was something else, something different, and the stillness suddenly chilled him, and he looked down at his shoes.

" I—I didn't mean him to pass away," he mumbled.

The police stenographer looked up. " To what? "

" To pass away," a uniformed cop repeated, whispering.

" What? " the stenographer asked again.

" He didn't mean him to pass away! " the cop shouted.

The cop's voice echoed in the silent room. The stenographer bent his head and began scribbling in his pad.

" Next case," the Chief of Detectives said.

Stevie walked off the stage, his mind curiously blank, his feet strangely leaden. He followed the cop to the door, and then walked with him to the elevator. They were both silent as the doors closed.

" You picked an important one for your first one," the cop said.

" He shouldn't have died on me," Stevie answered.

" You shouldn't have stabbed him," the cop said.

He tried to remember what Skinner had said to him before the line-up, but the noise of the elevator was loud in his ears, and he couldn't think clearly. He could only remember the word " neighbours " as the elevator dropped to the basement to join them.

SMASHING TIME!

The celebrations which the children indulged in on the 5th unfortunately ended in the smashing of a large pane of glass in the dining-room window.

On going into the question of repairs, Mr. Fussy found that, if this pane of glass had been 8 in. deeper and 5 in. less in width, or 4 in. less in depth and 3 in. wider, the cost of renewing it, at 8½d. per square foot, would have been exactly the same.

What was the cost?

For baffled readers, the answer is on page 167.

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WIDOWHOOD SYSTEM

by Brian Friel

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THE very day his mother was buried, Harry Quinn set about converting the two attic rooms—from where she had ruled the house for the last nineteen years of her impossible dotage—into a model pigeon loft, so that he could transfer his precious racing birds from the cold, corrugated iron structure in the back garden to the chaotic comfort of 16 Distillery Lane, which was already a ramshackle shop on the ground floor and Handme Levy's flat on the second.

Handme—short for Hand-Me-Down-The-Moon; he was six and a half feet if he was an inch—helped with the task of reconstruction because the early New Year was an even slacker time than usual in the tailoring business and because he was already in arrears to Harry, his landlord. Fusilier Lynch gave a hand too, out of the goodness of his heart. For six days the three men worked, stopping only to eat the meals that Judith Costigan, who lived next door in number 15, made for them.

When the job was complete, they carried the thirty-six pigeons in, two at a time; each man making six journeys out to the garden, in through the shop, past the smirking tailor's dummies in Handme's living-room, and up to the top of the house. Then, they drank in celebration.

They drank, as they did after every race, win or lose, in the kitchen behind the shop.

" It's a powerful loft," said Handme. " Height and space and light."

" A castle," murmured the Fusilier.

" You waited one hell of a long time to get them inside, Harry," said Handme. " But it was worth waiting for."

" A palace," said the Fusilier.

Harry Quinn suffered from running eyes. They were never dry. Strangers who went into his shop were disturbed by the sight of the weeping shopkeeper.

" Now I'm going to tell you something, boys," he announced, mopping his tears with a soiled handkerchief, " something that's been in my nose for nineteen years."

" You're going to marry Judith! " said Handme.

" I'm going to produce the best racing pigeon Mullaghduff has ever seen. As a matter of fact, boys, I'm going to breed the first local pigeon ever to win the All Ireland Open Championship."

Handme's face was permanently fixed in the expression a man has immediately before he sneezes—mouth open, teeth bared, eyes wide, forehead wrinkled—a look of delight and anticipation. That on top of a thin, gangling body made the young girls of the town scared stiff of him.

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"By God, Harry, you will, too!" he cried. "Won't he, Fusilier?"

The Fusilier was short, stocky, silent, in his late forties, the youngest of the three bachelors; better at greyhounds and whippets than at birds, but a good all-rounder. "How?" he asked cautiously.

"By science," said Harry. "I'll get my bird, train it the way you would train an athlete, feed it right, exercise it right, get to understand its psychology. It's a matter of science."

"You're right, Harry!" said Handme. "The All Ireland Open, no less! Eh?"

"And where do you propose getting this wonder bird in the first place?" asked the Fusilier.

Harry paused before he answered. "I'm going to breed it," he said.

"Huh!" The Fusilier laughed dryly, and began examining his corduroy riding-breeches, that were bald at the knees.

"I'm going to breed it scientifically," Harry went on calmly, "according to the theories, principles, and practice of Gregor Johann Mendel."

"Is that the Galway buck that raced the wee grey hen last . . .?" Handme began . . .

"Gregor Johann Mendel says—and in case you boys never heard of him, he is a priest and a scientist—he says that a racing pigeon isn't a racing pigeon at all. A racing pigeon, he says, is a bundle of bloody genes. Get the right genes, says he, and you have the winner of the All Ireland cooing in your lap."

"What club is he in—this Mendel fella? Where's his loft?" the Fusilier asked.

"What I've been doing all my life, what every fancier in this country has been doing all their lives," Harry went on softly, "is mating the best cocks with the best hens, quality with quality, stamina with stamina, speed with speed. And we've all been wasting our time."

He leaned across the kitchen table and wiped his eyes so as to get a moment's clear vision of his friends' faces. "According to the Mendelian theory, when you breed champ with champ, the offspring generally tends towards the average of the species, unless both members to the union are . . ." He faltered. The quotation he had learnt from the *Pigeon Fancier's Post* began to fade. The word *homozygous* pirouetted before his mind and vanished . . .

"Anyhow," he went on, "the point is this: quality with quality is no guarantee of quality young ones. Haven't we

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proved that ourselves? So what I'm going to do now, boys, is the very opposite: fast cock to slow hen; lazy cock to active hen. Until sooner or later I'll have a national winner in my loft. Trial and error—the scientific method. And, begob, boys, with the old woman out of the road and the place to myself, there's nothing to stop me now!"

Later that night, when Harry invited his friends into Judith's house for supper, Handme told her of Harry's scheme. She laughed and said, "Good for you, Harry!" and went on making them a huge feed of rashers and eggs. There never was a more even-tempered, more placid woman than Judith Costigan.

When her young scut of a brother, Billy, whom she had reared, sailed for Canada one August morning, leaving her with no means of support except the knitting she did for the glove factory, she laughed and said, "Amn't I lucky to have a roof over my head?" When old Mrs. Quinn became bed-ridden and summoned Judith to feed and clean her, Judith laughed and said, "It's the least I could do for a neighbour."

And on those Saturday nights, after a race had been lost or won, when Harry and Handme and the Fusilier had drunk themselves silly and adjourned to Judith's to round off the night, she laughed most heartily because Harry invariably said to her, "Judith Costigan, some day I'm going to ask you to marry me—some day when I'm good and sober."

It was a funny sight to see Harry swaying in the middle of the kitchen floor, his hand on his chest, his cheeks streaming with tears, and Judith, plump, smooth, hazel-eyed, fresher looking than her forty-four years, nodding her head and laughing generously at him. It was so funny that Handme Levy would forget himself and begin to do a jig, until his spinning head could no longer control his long, miserable shanks, and he would fall into a chair and grimace wildly at the ceiling. It was so funny that the Fusilier would get maudlin about his time in the British army when, as he said, "For four long years my stomach was starved for the whiff of a greyhound." When they had sobered they would crawl home, and they would not call on Judith again until the next race day, or until they wanted a well-cooked meal.

Harry's mother was not dead a year when the laziest of Harry's hens, which he had paired with a cock with a broken wing, laid two white eggs. The awkward father knocked one of the eggs out of the nest, and it smashed on the concrete floor. Out of the other egg came the bird that Harry was waiting for.

Of course he did not know this until he saw it on the wing.

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But he knew then. Then there was no doubt at all. It was a small pigeon, blue-grey, with a white neck and a flat-topped head. Its great pectoral muscle filled its breast and stirred gently against the hand. Its back was broad and strong and straight. Its legs were short. Its full ovoid body was smothered in velvety feathers.

Handme examined it first. Then he passed it to the Fusilier. Harry waited for their comments. It was a Sunday morning, and the lofts were open, and the birds in squadrons of fifteen flew at the same height as the chapel bells, rolling over the tops of the pines and across the river and out over the barley fields and back to the peaks of the pines again.

" It's a good bird, all right," said Handme. " How does it take off? "

" Clean and straight," said Harry.

" Any trouble in trapping it? "

" None. It lands on the platform and drops right down."

" Aye, it's a good bird, all right," said Handme. " Isn't it, Fusilier? "

The Fusilier handed the bird back to Harry. " It's a cock," he said.

" It's what? " Handme squealed his surprise.

" I know it's a cock," said Harry with dignity.

" But-but-but Harry, you're not thinking of racing a cock, are you? " Handme spluttered. " I mean to say . . . you never raced a cock in your life. It was always hens—the natural system—back to the nest . . . "

" And did I ever do anything worthwhile, racing the natural system? " snapped Harry, suddenly angry. " Isn't that what all the fanciers round here are doing—racing the natural system; a flock of bloody turkeys waddling back to a cosy seat on eggs—and did any man of them ever win a national trophy in his puff? Well, did they or did they not? "

" Not that I know of," said Handme, subdued more by Harry's voice than by his argument.

" So," said Harry quietly, " I'm going to try the widowhood system. And I'm going to make a job of it."

" You will too," said Handme. " It's a grand bird all right."

" Have you mated him yet? " asked the Fusilier.

" Not yet," said Harry. " I'm going to mate him with a wee, fat, red hen. I saw him eyeing her."

" Is he keen? " said the Fusilier.

" How the hell would I know! He didn't confide in me! "

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"There's nothing wrong with the widowhood system," said the Fusilier calmly, looking out across the still sabbatical town, "except for the drawbacks. I seen cocks in my day that were so eager to get back to the hen they battered themselves against the basket and wore themselves out so that they were too tired to race. And I seen cocks in my day that didn't give a damn if they never saw the hen again. If you want a sure performance, give me a hen every time. A hen will always hurry back to the nest. It's not called the natural system for nothing."

"And what the hell do you think the widowhood system is?" said Harry, wiping his cheeks with the cuff of his jacket. "What could be more natural than for a cock to fly back to its mate?"

"You're right there, Harry," Handme agreed, although he was thinking of the young girls of the town scattering in all directions when he met them coming out of the glove factory.

"Anyhow," Harry went on, "I'm sending him to Omagh next Friday week for a try-out the next day. You'll see then if I'm right."

"Thirty miles is too far," said the Fusilier. "Send him to Omagh, and that's the last you'll see of him."

"Maybe the Fusilier's right," said Handme. "Why not try Strabane for a first outing? Fifteen miles is plenty for a first outing."

"And you can't race him till he's mated first," said the Fusilier.

"And you're not sure that the red hen'll have him," said Handme.

Harry blinked his eyes and glared fiercely from one to the other.

"You two," he said, his voice breaking with frustration, "think you know everything! But you know damn all! This is my bird! And I'm going to race him from Omagh! And he'll mate for me! And he'll race for me—scientifically—by the widowhood system!"

He flung open the trap door and held the bird on the palms of his hands beneath it, as if it were an offering. It spread its wings, hesitated a second, then rose up and out into the spring air where it joined a squadron of fifteen and tumbled in the waves of the singing bells . . .

Handme and the Fusilier were right: Omagh was too far. But in everything else they were wrong. On the Tuesday before the race Harry had paired the bird with the red hen, and she had acquiesced. And on the day before the race he had held the cock close to the hen—until his muscles tensed, but not allowing

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him to trample her. Then he slipped the rubber race ring round the pigeon's leg, thrust the bird into the basket, and carried him down to the railway station. The know-all Fusilier was wrong in that detail too—the bird did not batter itself against the sides of the cage. Indeed, Harry would have been happier if it had shown even some anxiety at being separated from its mate. But it was not an excitable bird, he consoled himself; and surely that was a good thing.

Four other pigeons from the local club were entered for the race, and the best of of them, Joe McSorley's chequered hen, clocked in seconds after 11.00 a.m. Major O'Donnell's two birds arrived next at 11.15 a.m. and 11.18 a.m. At 11.23 a.m. Harry saw Patsy Boyle's ten-year-old hen flit over the pine trees, as fresh as if she were starting out, and she had eight miles farther north to travel, which would leave her velocity almost as good as the Major's birds.

The angelus bell rang at noon. Harry went up to the loft for the eighth time. His cock had not returned. He boiled potatoes for his lunch and ate them. He washed the counter in the shop, mopped the floor, and disposed of fly-papers that had been hanging from the ceiling since last summer. He climbed the stairs again. Still no bird. Then he threw a handful of maize inside the trap door, went down to Handme's bedroom, and shook him awake. " Keep an eye on the shop! " he shouted into the startled eyes. " I'm away out for a pint."

" The bird—is he back? "

" He'll come in his own good time," said Harry over his shoulder.

His own good time was at 6.30 p.m. that evening, and by then Harry and Handme and the Fusilier were sozzled. It was the Fusilier who found him perched in the loft. The other two heard the Fusilier stumbling down the stairs, singing to the bird.

" Welcome back, wee cock! " cried Handme. " Had you a nice holiday in London? "

" Don't let me see him! " Harry called, crying into his hands. " He disgusts me—that's what he does—disgusts me."

" Shhhh," said the Fusilier. " He's back, isn't he? Isn't that all that matters? Where's the clock? Gimme the timing clock and we'll drop his ring in—just for the record." He kissed the bird gently on the back.

" Take him away! " Harry called. " He disgusts me."

" Hens every time," said Handme. " For reliability and dependability and— "

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" Fling him in the loft out of my sight! I still have some bloody pride."

" Now, now, now, boys," said the Fusilier, holding the bird to his cheek.

" He went and had a holiday in Trafalgar Square! That's what he done! "

" But he'll race! " said Harry. " He'll race before I'm done with him, or I'll know why!"

" He's nothing but a bundle of beans," said Handme, believing he was quoting Gregor Johann Mendel.

" Yes sir, he'll race! I'm not beaten yet, not by a long chalk! "

That night ended in Judith's house. After she had fed them she saw Handme's dance, and heard the Fusilier's reminiscences about army life, and listened to Harry's tearful proposal. They did not leave her until almost three o'clock in the morning, and she was still laughing when she said good night to them.

In the following two months the bird was raced three times—from Monaghan, from Campbeltown in Scotland, and from Wexford. Each time Harry set his timing clock but never submitted it to the local club for scrutiny after the bird had returned. When the other fanciers would ask him was he competing or was he not, he would reply that he was entering but not competing; " I just want him to get some practice," he would reply, " but I don't want him to stretch himself until the All Ireland." And they would say, " Suit yourself, Harry. It's your bird," and wink slyly at one another.

Handme came up with several explanations for the cock's indifferent performances. " I've been studying its skull, Harry," he said, the day after the Monaghan outing. " That's where your trouble lies."

" Aye? "

" It's my opinion, Harry, that the head isn't developed right, with the result that the brain is being squeezed in its cavity."

" Is that your opinion? "

" Doesn't it sound sensible? I think that if we could get some way to develop its skull, there wouldn't be that pressure on its brain. And if its brain wasn't being squeezed, it could concentrate better on flying."

" D'you know what I think, Handme? " Harry replied with commendable control. " I think that if you stuck to your sewing it might suit all of us a lot better."

After the Campbeltown trial his explanation was that the pigeon was allergic to salt water. " It's my belief that he was going like a bomb until he was over the North Channel. Then the salt

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water went for his sinuses and his respiration—his breathing was done for." And when the bird took over sixteen hours to return from Wexford on a day that was calm and clear and sunny, Handme said, " Harry, I've got the answer now: he's tired of the wee hen. Give him another hen, and you'll find he'll be back before he leaves."

" He wouldn't be interested in another hen," said Harry.

" He wouldn't what! " said Handme, baring his teeth. "Pigeons are no different to the rest of us! "

" For your information," said Harry, remembering a quotation from the *Post*, " pigeons tend to be monogamous."

" Is that what Father Mendel says? "

" It is," said Harry wearily.

" You may be sure! That's what's wrong with us in this country—bloody-well priest-ridden! And if you ask me, he should know nothing about all that. So take my advice, Harry, and get him another mate."

" It's in him," said Harry, not answering the tailor. " It's deep down in him. All I need is time. Because it's deep down in him."

The Fusilier was of the opinion that the bird was physically perfect, but that some delicate imbalance in its psyche caused it to have momentary blackouts when it was on the wing. All birds, he explained to Judith, depended for their direction on the action of the earth's magnetic grid on the membrane of the mind. It had to do with electricity and electrodes, he said. And when Harry's cock was flying it suffered from " mental blackouts—like electric fuses," so that it had to fly " blind " for periods until the psyche righted itself. Something similar happened to men suffering from shell-shock, he believed.

With great peals of laughter Judith relayed this information to Harry at lunch one Sunday. Ever since his mother had become invalided he had had his Sunday meals with her.

" Rubbish! " he said, his tears dropping into the rhubarb pie.

" It sounded great to me," she said.

" All lies," he grunted.

" Well, can you explain how your birds know how to make their way home over hundreds of miles? "

" Course I can," he said. " It's based on science."

" Science? "

" Every bird," he said patiently, " has a microscopic eye. What's the first thing he does when he is liberated? He gets away up into the sky and looks about him. With his two eyes—

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the kind you and me have—he gets his bearings. But with his microscopic eye—it's buried inside his skull—he sort of takes a photograph of the whole country, like a bloody big map in his head. He knows then exactly where he is and plots his course according."

" Not a doubt in the world? "

" As simple as if he was running on railway lines."

" Lucky bird," said Judith. " Lucky, lucky bird."

For a second he wondered at the tone of her voice. But almost at once she was laughing again, and telling him that she had had a letter from Billy in Canada. He had married, got himself a good job, and wanted her to join him.

" With the microscopic eye," said Harry, " it's as simple as running on railway lines."

The All Ireland Open Championship was held on Saturday, August 5. All birds had to be at the liberating station, Mizen Head, County Cork, by 9.00 p.m. the night before. They would be released the following morning at 10.00 a.m., weather conditions being clement and propitious, as the *Post* put it.

Major O'Donnell volunteered to take all the Mullaghduff entrants in his beachwagon to Mizen Head on Friday, August 4. There were seven local competitors: Joe McSorley's chequered hen; the Major's two yearlings; Patsy Boyle's old grey hen, her daughter, and her grand-daughter; and Harry's cock. The Major sent word to Harry that he would call for the cock after lunch.

That morning Harry was a bundle of nerves. He spilt a bucket of maize on the floor of the loft, and when he was down on his hands and knees, gathering it up, he cracked his head on the handle of the door. The birds sensed his anxiety, and flew recklessly from side to side, cooing, colliding, squabbling, injuring themselves. All except the blue-grey cock. He stood quietly beneath the trap, now on one foot, now on the other, blinking his eyes, waiting.

Judith came panting up the stairs. " Harry! Where are you? "

" Up here! In the loft! "

She climbed the remaining stairs. " The Major's below," she gasped, " looking for the basket."

" He's what? Sure it's not lunch-time yet! "

" It's almost two o'clock," she said. " Come on. Here's the basket. Where's the bird? "

" The bird's not ready. I haven't ringed him yet, and he's not washed, and he has to be shown— "

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" Give me," she said, plucking the rubber band from his hand. " This is him, isn't it? "

" That's— Easy! Easy! Handle him gently! "

She picked up the pigeon, turned him over on his back, and slipped the ring over his left foot. " Give him to me now," said Harry. " I want to wash him down in— "

" You haven't time," she said briskly. " The Major won't wait. Where's the red hen? "

Harry pointed to a nest with a wire-mesh door. Judith opened the door and put the cock into the hen. She closed the door again. The cock spread his wings and arched his neck.

" That's enough! Take him out! " Harry shouted. " Take him out before it's too late! "

" Shut up! " she said very quietly, as if the loft were hers and not Harry's.

The hen got to her feet. The cock was beating the mesh with his wings. " For heaven's sake, Judy—please—you'll ruin everything—please—"

" Now," she said softly. " Now we'll take him out."

She opened the door, lifted the cock out, and slipped him into the basket. " Will you carry it down, or will I? " she asked.

Harry was so astounded at her competence and her assurance, so amazed at the resolution on her calm face, that all he could reply was, " Judith, I cut my head." He sounded and looked so miserable that she burst into laughter.

" Here," she said, thrusting the basket into his arms. " You carry it. It's supposed to be the man's job, isn't it? "

So Harry carried the basket down, and Judith followed behind him, and they stood together at the edge of the pavement, and watched the beachwagon drive off.

" How do you think it'll do? " he said at last.

" God alone knows that, Harry," she said. " Come inside till I bandage your head."

The following morning was blue and fragile, but by afternoon the sky became overcast, and a drizzle of rain glazed the streets and rooftops. Even if the bird were to do the two hundred and eighty-one miles in eight hours, Harry calculated—and to beat McSorley's hen it would have to do at least that—it would not arrive back in Mullaghduff until 6.00 p.m. But every quarter of an hour after he had made his lunch, he found himself running from the shop to the loft, and back again to the shop. Eventually he closed the shop altogether, and joined Handme and the Fusilier in the loft.

He would have been wiser to stay in the shop because their

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calm—worse, their assumption that the cock would never make its way back in such weather—unnerved him altogether.

" Ah, well," sighed Handme. " It's a lesson to us all. If he had been a hen, now— "

" There's no comparison," said the Fusilier. " Like greyhounds and whippets."

" —the wind and the rain might do their damnedest on him, but he would make it back to the nest, come hell or high water. Nature," he said, snarling placidly at the Fusilier, " is a wonderful invention."

" But he's a cock," said the Fusilier.

" A strong cock, not a bad cock at all, but still a cock," said Handme. The details of the bird's loss interested him. " Would he even have made the length of Limerick? " he asked the Fusilier.

" At the very outside," said the Fusilier.

" If the North Cork hawks didn't get him first."

" Bad brutes, them."

" They've been known to attack children—even North Cork children."

" Or maybe he broke his neck on the telegraph wires."

" All the same, the spirit would have been game enough."

" He had spirit; I'll say that for him."

" And staying power."

" But a cock, "said the Fusilier.

" A good cock, but still a cock."

" Give me the natural system every time."

" That's what's wrong with the widowhood system," said Handme. " It's just not natural."

Harry watched the rain blacken the trunks of the pine trees. " It's in him," he muttered. " It's deep down in him."

" What's that, Harry? " asked the Fusilier.

Harry turned round. " Go in next door," he said, " and tell Judith to make us a pot of tea. We have a couple of hours to wait yet."

" And get us some refreshments when you're out," Handme called after the Fusilier.

" It must be a wonderful sight," Handme went on, " to see five or six thousand birds being liberated at the one time." He licked his lips and bared his teeth until the gums showed. " Man, it's something I dream about. A lovely summer morning, and ten thousand fluttering angels rising up to heaven, and painting the sky with white and grey and. . . "

" D'you know what I dream about? " snapped Harry. " That

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some day you'll pay me the seven months' rent you owe me!" Handme lowered his head, and Harry went back to the traps and stared out at the rain. Even the birds went silent, squatting motionless on the perches, watching.

The Fusilier came back with two dozen stout and the news that Judith was not at home.

"Of course she's in. She's always in on a Saturday afternoon."

"I'm telling you she's not," said the Fusilier. "Go and see for yourself. Anyhow, the gas man's down there, looking to get reading your meter."

Harry saw to the gas man, and then went into Judith's house. It was empty. He went through the narrow hall, into the kitchen, and out to the back garden, calling, "Judith! Are you home, Judith?" He stood at the bottom of the stairs, and called up, "Judith! *Judith*?" There was no reply.

Then, for no reason at all except that the race had upset him, the thought suddenly struck him that maybe she was lying dying across the bed. He tore up the stairs and flung open the bedroom door. The room was empty. Only her pink nightdress lay across the bottom of the bed. His calm returned. He came downstairs again, pulled the front door after him, and went back to his own house. Before he went up to the loft he took a handkerchief from the row that was drying in front of the range in the kitchen because his eyes were giving him hell.

By the time the bottles were finished, Handme and the Fusilier had discussed politics, the Church, and the decline in public morals. Harry heard them but did not listen. He was battling north with his bird, fighting wind and rain and telegraph poles and hawks. His microscopic eye was not functioning, and he was flying by instinct, doggedly, over wet bogs and dirty lakes and sodden fields, uncertain if he were going in the right direction, but determined to carry on. The terrible effort anaesthetised him; his mind was numb. The labour of keeping his cock aloft and flying, and of magnetising it to himself exhausted him.

"She might," he heard the Fusilier saying.

"It would be the sensible thing to do," said Handme.

Dusk was falling. The birds were making their settling-in, night noises.

"She's still a strong young woman," said Handme.

"And they say Canada's a fine country," said the Fusilier.

"I believe she'll go," said Handme.

Harry dried his eyes. "Go where?" he asked.

"I'm just telling the Fusilier here that Judith's thinking of joining the brother in Canada."

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" How do you know that? " said Harry. His mind was stirring again. The exhaustion was melting from his body.

" She was telling me herself."

" What about a drink, boys? " the Fusilier broke in. " Do you feel like going out for some, Harry? "

" Yes," said Harry. " Yes—yes—I'll go and get some." As he was leaving the loft Handme was saying, " With all this automation and stuff, what in God's name will men do with their leisure time? That's what worries me."

The smirking dummies in Handme's living-room leered at Harry as he passed them, and whispered, *Canada, Canada, Canada.* Their soft, insinuating voices followed him down to the ground floor. " Like Hell! " he said aloud to himself. " Like bloody hell! " But the sound of his own voice, unechoed, unanswered, only aggravated the fear that was growing in him.

Slowly, controlling his steps, refusing to be panicked, he walked into the house next door. " Judith! " he called sternly. Then, again, " Judith! " When no reply came, his fears babbled excitedly: she's gone; she has packed her bags and is gone; she's gone to Billy in Canada, Canada, Canada, Canada . . .

He came out into the street, and stood in the rain, and tried to will the jabbering dreads into silence. But they were not to be silenced. They drove him into motion, moving his legs, turning his head, slowly at first, then urging him forward more and more quickly until he was trotting along Distillery Lane and out the Dublin Road towards the glove factory. Of course she was not there—it was the half-day; the big iron gates were locked. Nor was she in the church. Nor was she anywhere about the three streets that met in the square.

By now his brain had ceased functioning again, although his body was still fresh, more than fresh, vigorous. If the mind had been capable of throwing up any suggestion, however absurd—she had gone to visit cousins in Letterkenny; she had gone shopping to Coleraine—the body would have taken him there. But the mind was comatose, and the stupid body kept functioning automatically, eagerly, pointlessly. Three times he tried the church; three times he went round the square. And then instinctively, the body carried him back to her house again. The door was open, the smell of frying met him in the hall. " Judy? "

" That you Harry? " she called from the kitchen. " Come on in. You're just in time for something to eat."

When she saw him she shook with laughter. " Well! Would you look! Did you fall into the river or what? "

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From then on Harry never knew exactly what happened. Afterwards, he had a vague memory of catching her plump hands in his and kissing them roughly. He had a vague memory too, of her asking him over and over again, "Are you sober, Harry? Are you sober?" and of her laughter rising to an unnatural pitch and then stopping altogether. The only memory that was sharp and quite clear was of her whispering to him at some stage, "Will you marry me, Harry?" and of himself kissing her on the mouth in love and gratitude, because somehow at that moment, the question seemed apt, more than apt—inspired—by some divine intuition she had found words for the longing that was deep down in him, but so deep that he could never have expressed it because he would never have recognised it.

It was no time to talk of the race; he was aware of that; but that is what he talked of to her for the next half hour; of the bird's strength and courage and determination; of his confidence that it would make Mullaghduff, maybe not in winning time, but at least it would complete the course.

Talk of the cock led him to Handme and the Fusilier, the big long string, and the wee tight keg, sitting in the dusk of the loft, discussing automation, their feet ringed with empty bottles, waiting for replenishments. The more he talked of them, the funnier they seemed to be. Until, finally, he was laughing so that his sides hurt, and his eyes were streaming with water. And in the crook of his arm Judy was laughing too, and crying too. And for that half hour, for all the crying, they were the happiest couple in the whole of Mullaghduff.

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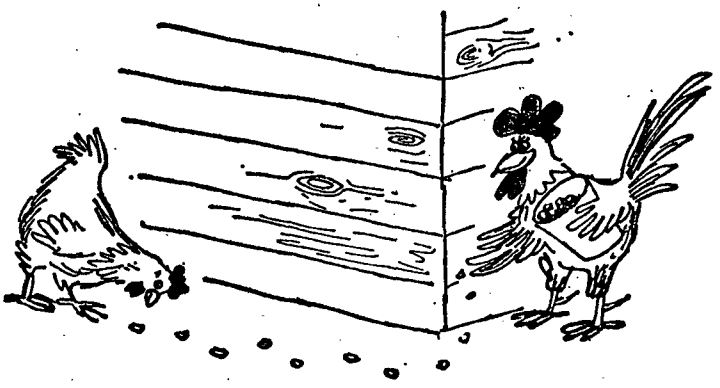

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Enormous eyes—uncannily human

THE SHINING ONES

BY ARTHUR C. CLARKE

WHEN the switchboard said that the Soviet Embassy was on the line, my first reaction was: "Good—another job!" But the moment I heard Goncharov's voice, I knew there was trouble.

"Klaus? This is Mikhail. Can you come over at once? It's very urgent, and I can't talk on the phone."

I worried all through the 20 minute drive to Geneva, marshalling my defences in case anything had gone wrong at our end. But I could think of nothing; at the moment, we had no outstanding contracts with the Russians. The last job had been completed six months before, on time, and to their entire satisfaction.

Well, they were not satisfied with it now, as I discovered quickly enough. Mikhail Goncharov, the commercial attaché, was an old friend of mine; he told me all he knew, but it was not very much.

"We've just had an urgent cable from Ceylon," he said. "They want you out there immediately. There's serious trouble at the hydrothermal project."

"What sort of trouble?" I asked. I knew at once, of course, that it would be the deep end, for that was the only part of the installation that had concerned us. The Russians themselves had done all the work on land—but they had had to call on us to fix those grids, three thousand feet down in the Indian Ocean. There is no other firm in the world that can live up to our motto: ANY JOB, ANY DEPTH.

"All I know," said Goncharov, "is that the site engineers report a complete breakdown, that the Prime Minister of Ceylon is opening the plant three weeks from now and that Moscow will be very, very unhappy if it's not working then."

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My mind went rapidly through the penalty clauses in our contract. The firm seemed to be covered, because the client had signed the take-over certificate, thereby admitting that the job was up to specification. However, it was not as simple as that; if negligence on our part were proved, we might be safe from legal action, but it would be very bad for business. And it would be even worse for me, personally; for I had been project supervisor in Trinco Deep.

Don't call me a diver, please; I hate the name. I'm a deep-sea engineer, and I use diving gear about as often as an airman uses a parachute. Most of my work is done with TV and remote-controlled robots; when I do have to go down myself, I'm inside a mini-sub with external manipulators. We call it a lobster because of its claws; the standard model works down to five thousand feet, but there are special versions that will operate at the bottom of the Marianas Trench. I've never been there myself, but will be glad to quote terms if you're interested. At a rough estimate, it will cost you a dollar a foot plus a thousand an hour on the job itself.

I realised that the Russians meant business when Goncharov said that a jet was waiting at Zurich, and could I be at the airport within two hours?

"Look," I said. "I can't do a thing without equipment—and the gear needed even for an inspection weighs tons. Besides it's all at Spezia."

"I know," Mikhail answered implacably. "We'll have another jet transport there. Cable from Ceylon as soon as you know what you want: it will be on the site within twelve hours. But please don't talk to *anyone* about this; we prefer to keep our problems to ourselves."

I agreed with this, for it was my problem too. As I left the office, Mikhail pointed to the wall calendar, said, "Three weeks," and ran his finger across his throat. And I knew he wasn't thinking of *his* neck.

Two hours later I was climbing over the Alps, saying good-bye to the family by radio, and wondering why, like every other sensible Swiss, I hadn't become a banker or gone into the watch business. It was all the fault of the Piccards and Hannes Keller, I told myself moodily; why did they have to start this deep-sea tradition, in Switzerland of all countries? Then I settled down to sleep, knowing that I would have little enough in the days to come.

We landed at Trincomalee just after dawn, and the huge, complex harbour—whose geography I've never quite mastered—

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was a maze of capes, islands, interconnecting waterways and basins large enough to hold all the navies of the world. I could see the big white control building, in a somewhat flamboyant architectural style, on a headland overlooking the Indian Ocean. The siting was pure propaganda—though of course if I'd been Russian I'd have called it public relations.

Not that I really blamed my clients; they had good reason to be proud of this, the most ambitious attempt yet made to harness the thermal energy of the sea. It was not the first attempt; there had been an unsuccessful one by the French scientist Georges Claude in the 1930s, and a much bigger one at Abidjan, on the west coast of Africa, in the 1950s.

All these projects depended on the same surprising fact—that even in the tropics the sea a mile down is almost at freezing point. Where billions of tons of water are concerned, this temperature difference represents a colossal amount of energy and a fine challenge to the engineers of power-starved countries.

Claude and his successors had tried to tap this energy with low-pressure steam engines; the Russians had used a much simpler and more direct method. For over a hundred years it had been known that electric currents flow in many materials if one end is heated and the other cooled; and ever since the 1940s Russian scientists had been working to put this thermo-electric effect to practical use. Their earliest devices had not been very efficient—though good enough to power thousands of radios by the heat of kerosene lamps—but in 1974 they had made a big, and still secret, break-through. Though I fixed the power elements at the cold end of the system, I never really saw them; they were completely hidden in anticorrosive covering. All I know is that they formed a big grid like lots of old-fashioned steam radiators bolted together.

I recognised most of the faces in the little crowd waiting on the Trinco airstrip; friends or enemies, they all seemed glad to see me—especially Chief Engineer Shapiro.

"Well, Lev," I said, as we drove off in the station wagon, "what's the trouble?"

"We don't know," he said frankly. "It's your job to find out—and to put it right."

"Well, what happened?"

"Everything worked perfectly up to the full-power tests," Shapiro answered. "Output was within five per cent of estimate until 01.34 Tuesday morning." He grimaced; obviously that time was engraved on his heart. "Then the voltage started to

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fluctuate violently, so we cut the load and watched the meters. I thought that some idiot of a skipper had hooked the cables—you know the trouble we've taken to avoid that happening—so we switched on the searchlights and looked out to sea. There wasn't a ship in sight; anyway, who would have tried to anchor just outside harbour on a clear, calm night?

"There was nothing we could do except watch the instruments and keep testing; I'll show you all the graphs when we get to the office. After four minutes everything went open circuit. We can locate the break exactly, of course—and it's in the deepest part, right at the grid. It would be there, and not at this end of the system," he added gloomily, pointing out of the window.

We were just driving past the solar pond—the equivalent of the boiler in a conventional heat engine. This was an idea that the Russians had borrowed from the Israelis; it was simply a shallow lake, blackened at the bottom, holding a concentrated solution of brine. It acts as a very efficient heat trap, and the sun's rays bring the liquid up to almost 200 degrees Fahrenheit. Submerged in it were the "hot" grids of the thermoelectric system, every inch of two fathoms down. Massive cables connected them to my department, 150 degrees colder and three thousand feet lower, in the undersea canyon that comes to the very entrance of Trinco harbour.

"I suppose you checked for earthquakes?" I asked.

"Of course. There was nothing on the seismograph."

"What about whales? I warned you that they might give trouble."

More than a year before, when the main conductors were being run out to sea, I'd told the engineers about the drowned sperm whale found entangled in a telegraph cable half a mile down off South America. About a dozen similar cases are known—but ours, it seemed, was not one of them.

"That was the second thing we thought of," answered Shapiro. "We got on to the fisheries department, the navy and the air force. No whales anywhere along the coast."

It was at that point that I stopped theorising, because I overheard something that made me a little uncomfortable. Like all Swiss, I'm good at languages, and have picked up a fair amount of Russian. There was no need to be much of a linguist, however, to recognise the word "sabotash."

It was spoken by Dimitri Karpukhin, the political adviser on the project. I didn't like him, nor did the engineers, who sometimes went out of their way to be rude to him. One of the old-style Communists who had never quite escaped from the shadow

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of Stalin, he was suspicious of everything outside the Soviet Union, and most of the things inside it. Sabotage was just the explanation that would appeal to him.

There were, of course, a great many people who would not be exactly broken-hearted if the Trinco power project failed. Politically, the prestige of the U.S.S.R. was committed; economically, billions were involved, for if hydrothermal plants proved a success they might compete with oil, coal, water power and, especially, nuclear energy.

Yet I could not really believe in sabotage; after all, the Cold War was over. It was just possible that someone had made a clumsy attempt to grab a sample of the grid, but even this seemed unlikely. I could count on my fingers the number of people in the world who could tackle such a job—and half of them were on my payroll.

The underwater TV camera arrived that same evening, and, working all through the night we had cameras, monitors and two kilometres of coaxial cable loaded aboard a launch by morning. As we pulled out of the harbour, I thought I saw a familiar figure standing on the jetty, but it was too far away to be certain and I had other things on my mind. If you must know, I am not a good sailor; I am only really happy *underneath* the sea.

We took a careful fix on the Round Island lighthouse and stationed ourselves directly above the grid. The self-propelled camera, looking like a midget bathyscaphe, went over the side; as we watched the monitors, we went with it in spirit.

The water was extremely clear and extremely empty, but as we neared the bottom there were a few signs of life. A small shark came and stared at us, then a pulsating blob of jelly went drifting by, followed by a thing like a big spider with hundreds of hairy legs, tangling and twisting together. At last the sloping canyon wall swam into view; we were right on target, for there were the thick cables running down into the depths, just as I had seen them when I made the final check of the installation six months before.

I turned on the low-powered jets and let the camera drift down the power cables. They seemed in perfect condition, still firmly anchored by the pitons we had driven into the rock. It was not until I came to the grid itself that there was any sign of trouble.

Have you ever seen the radiator grille of a car after it's run into a lamp post? Well, one section of the grid looked very much like that. Something had battered it in, as if a gargantuan madman had gone to work on it with a sledgehammer.

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There were gasps of astonishment and anger from the people looking over my shoulder. I heard "sabotash" muttered again, and for the first time began to take it seriously. The only other explanation that made sense was a falling boulder, but the slopes of the canyon had been carefully checked against this very possibility.

Whatever the cause, the damaged grid had to be replaced. That could not be done until my lobster—all 20 tons of it—was flown out from the Spezia dockyard where it was kept between jobs.

"Well," said Shapiro, when I had finished my visual inspection and photographed the sorry spectacle on the screen, "how long will it take?"

I refused to commit myself. The first thing I ever learnt in the underwater business is that no job turns out as you expect. Cost and time estimates can never be firm, because it's not until you're at least halfway through a contract that you know exactly what you're up against.

My private guess was three days. So I said, "If everything goes well, it shouldn't take more than a week."

Shapiro groaned. "Can't you do it quicker?"

"I won't tempt fate by making rash promises. Anyway, that still gives you two weeks before your deadline."

He had to be content with that, though he kept nagging at me all the way back into harbour. When we got there, he had something else to think about.

"Morning, Joe," I said to the man who was still waiting patiently on the jetty. "I thought I recognised you on the way out. What are *you* doing here?"

"I was going to ask you the same question."

"You'd better speak to my boss. Chief Engineer Shapiro—meet Joe Watkins, science correspondent of *Time* magazine."

Lev's response was not exactly cordial. Normally, there was nothing he liked better than talking to newsmen, who arrived at the rate of about one a week. Now, as the target date approached, they would be flying in from all directions. Including, of course, from Russia; and at the present moment Tass would be just as unwelcome as *Time*.

It was amusing to see how Karpukhin took charge of the situation. From that moment, Joe had permanently attached to him as guide, philosopher and drinking companion, a smooth, young public relations type named Sergei Markov. Despite all Joe's efforts, the two were inseparable. In mid-afternoon,

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weary after a long conference in Shapiro's office, I caught up with them for a belated lunch at the government resthouse.

"What's going on here, Klaus?" Joe asked pathetically. "I smell trouble, but no one will admit anything."

I toyed with my curry, trying to separate the bits that were safe from those that would take off the top of my head.

"You can't expect me to discuss a client's affairs," I answered.

"You were talkative enough," Joe reminded me, "when you were doing the survey for the Gibraltar Dam."

"Well, yes," I admitted. "And I appreciate the write-up you gave me. But this time there are trade secrets involved. I'm—ah—making some last-minute adjustments to improve the efficiency of the system."

And that, of course, was the truth; for I was indeed hoping to raise the efficiency of the system from its present value of exactly zero.

"Hmm," said Joe sarcastically. "Thank you very much."

"Anyway," I said, trying to head him off, "what's *your* latest crackbrained theory?"

"I *am* working on a couple of ideas," he admitted. "They cropped up when I was doing the research on this story."

"Go on," I said, not daring to look up from the analysis of my curry.

"The other day I came across a very old map—Ptolemy's, if you're interested—of Ceylon. It reminded me of another old map in my collection, and I turned it up. There was the same central mountain, the same arrangement of rivers flowing to the sea. But this was a map of Atlantis."

"Oh, no!" I groaned. "Last time we met, you convinced me that Atlantis was the western Mediterranean basin."

Joe gave his engaging grin.

"I could've been wrong, couldn't I? Anyway, I have a much more striking piece of evidence. What's the old national name for Ceylon—and the modern Singhalese one, for that matter?"

I thought for a second, then exclaimed: "Why, Lanka, of course. Lanka—Atlantis." I rolled the names off my tongue.

"Precisely," said Joe. "But two clues, however striking, don't make a full-fledged theory; and that's as far as I've got at the moment."

"Too bad," I said, genuinely disappointed. "And your other project?"

"This will really make you sit up," Joe answered smugly. He reached into the battered briefcase he always carried and pulled out a bundle of papers.

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"This happened only one hundred and eighty miles from here and just over a century ago. The source of my information, you'll note, is about the best there is."

He handed me a Photostat, and I saw that it was a page of the London *Times* for July 4, 1874. I started to read without much enthusiasm, for Joe was always producing bits of ancient newspapers, but my apathy did not last long.

Briefly—I'd like to give the whole thing, but if you want more details your local library can dial you a facsimile in ten seconds—the clipping described how the 150-ton schooner *Pearl* left Ceylon in early May 1874 and then fell becalmed in the Bay of Bengal. On May 10, just before nightfall, an incredibly enormous squid surfaced half a mile from the schooner, whose captain foolishly opened fire on it with his rifle.

The squid swam straight for the *Pearl*, grabbed the masts with its gigantic arms and pulled the vessel over on her side. She sank within seconds, taking two of her crew with her; the others were rescued only because the steamer *Strathowen* was in sight and had witnessed the incident herself.

"Well," said Joe, when I'd read through it for the second time, "what do you think?"

"I don't believe in sea monsters."

"*The Times*," Joe answered, "is not prone to sensational journalism. And giant squids exist, though the biggest we know about are feeble, flabby beasts and don't weigh more than a ton, even when they have arms forty feet long."

"So? An animal like that couldn't capsize a one-hundred-and-fifty-ton schooner."

"True—but there's a lot of evidence that the so-called giant squid is merely a large squid. There may be decapods in the sea that really are giants. Why, only a year after the *Pearl* incident, a sperm whale off the coast of Brazil was seen struggling inside gigantic coils which finally dragged it down into the sea; you'll find the incident described in the *Illustrated London News* for November 20, 1875. And then, of course, there's that chapter in *Moby Dick* . . ."

"What chapter?"

"Why, the one called 'Squid.' We know that Melville was a very careful observer, but here he really lets himself go. He describes a calm day when a great white mass rose out of the sea 'like a snow-slide, new slid from the hills.' And this happened here in the Indian Ocean, perhaps a thousand miles south of the *Pearl* incident. Weather conditions were identical, please note.

"What the men of the *Pequod* saw floating on the water—

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I know this passage by heart, I've studied it so carefully—was ' a vast pulpy mass, furlongs in length and breadth, of a glancing cream-colour . . . innumerable long arms radiating from its centre, and curling and twisting like a nest of anacondas.' "

" Just a minute," said Sergei, who had been listening to all this with rapt attention. " What's a furlong? "

Joe looked slightly embarrassed.

" Actually, it's an eighth of a mile—660 feet." He raised his hand to stop our incredulous laughter. " Oh, I'm sure Melville didn't mean that literally. But here was a man who met sperm whales every day, groping for a unit of length to describe something a lot bigger. So he automatically jumped from fathoms to furlongs. That's my theory, anyway."

I pushed away the remaining untouchable portions of my curry.

" If you think you've scared me out of my job," I said, " you've failed miserably. But I promise you this—when I do meet a giant squid, I'll snip off a tentacle and bring it back as a souvenir."

Twenty-four hours later I was out there in the lobster, sinking slowly down towards the damaged grid. There was no way in which the operation could be kept secret, and Joe was an interested spectator from a nearby launch. That was the Russians' problem, not mine; I had suggested to Shapiro that they take him into their confidence, but this, of course, was vetoed by Karpukhin's suspicious mind. One could almost see him thinking: Just why should an American reporter turn up at this moment? —and ignoring the obvious answer that Trincomalee was now big news.

There is nothing in the least exciting or glamorous about deep-water operations if they're done properly. Excitement means lack of foresight, and that means incompetence. The incompetent do not last long in my business, nor do those who crave excitement. I went about my job with all the pent-up emotion of a plumber dealing with a leaking faucet.

The grids had been designed for easy maintenance, since sooner or later they would have to be replaced. Luckily, none of the threads had been damaged and the securing nuts came off easily when gripped with the power wrench. Then I switched control to the heavy-duty claws and lifted out the damaged grid without the slightest difficulty.

It's bad tactics to hurry on an underwater operation. If you try to do too much at once, you are liable to make mistakes. And if things go smoothly and you finish in a day a job you said would take a week, the client feels he hasn't had his money's

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worth. Though I was sure I could replace the grid that same afternoon, I followed the damaged unit up to the surface and closed shop for the day.

The next morning, despite a mild headache, I was over the site soon after dawn. (So was Joe, and so was Sergei, all set for a quiet day's fishing.) I waved cheerfully to them as I climbed into the lobster, and the tender's crane lowered me over the side. Over the other side, where Joe couldn't see it, went the replacement grid. A few fathoms down I lifted it out of the hoist and carried it to the bottom of Trinco Deep where, without any trouble, it was installed by the middle of the afternoon. Before I surfaced again, the lock nuts had been secured, the conductors spot-welded, and the engineers on shore had completed their continuity tests. By the time I was back on deck, the system was under load once more, everything was back to normal, and even Karpukhin was smiling—except when he stopped to ask himself the question that no one had yet been able to answer.

I still clung to the falling-boulder theory, for want of a better one. And I hoped that the Russians would accept it, so that we could stop this silly cloak-and-dagger business with Joe.

No such luck, I realised when both Shapiro and Karpukhin came to see me with very long faces.

"Klaus," said Lev, "we want you to go down again."

"It's your money," I replied. "But what do you want me to do?"

"We've examined the damaged grid, and there's a section of the thermo-element missing. Dimitri here thinks that—someone—has deliberately broken it off and carried it away."

"Then they did a damn clumsy job," I answered. "I can promise you it wasn't one of my men."

It was risky to make such jokes around Karpukhin, and no one was at all amused. Not even me; for by this time I was beginning to think that he might have something.

The sun was setting when I began my last dive into Trinco Deep, but the end of day has no meaning down there. I fell for 2,000 feet with no lights, because I like to watch the luminous creatures of the sea as they flash and flicker in the darkness, sometimes exploding like rockets just outside the observation port. In this open water there was no danger of a collision; in any case, I had the panoramic sonar scan running, and that would give far better warning than could my eyes.

At four hundred fathoms, I knew that something was wrong. The bottom was coming into view on the vertical sounder, but

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it was approaching much too slowly. My rate of descent was far too low; I could increase it easily enough by flooding another buoyancy tank, but I hesitated to do so. In my business, anything out of the ordinary needs an explanation; three times I have saved my life by waiting until I had one.

The thermometer gave me the answer. The temperature outside was five degrees higher than it should have been, and I am sorry to say that it took me several seconds to realise why.

Only a few hundred feet below me, the repaired grid was now running at full power, pouring out megawatts of heat as it tried to equalise the temperature difference between Trinco Deep and the solar pond up there on land. It wouldn't succeed, of course; but in the attempt it was generating electricity, and I was being swept upward in the geyser of warm water that was an incidental by-product.

When I finally reached the grid, it was quite difficult to keep the lobster in position against the upwelling current, and I began to sweat uncomfortably as the heat penetrated into the cabin. Being too hot on the seabed was a novel experience; so also was the mirage-like vision caused by the ascending water, which made my searchlights dance and tremble over the rock face I was exploring.

You must picture me, lights ablaze in that 500-fathom darkness, moving slowly down the slope of the canyon, which at this spot was about as steep as the roof of a house. The missing element—if it was still around—could not have fallen very far before coming to rest. I would find it in ten minutes or not at all.

After an hour's searching I had turned up several broken light bulbs (it's astonishing how many get thrown overboard from ships—the seabeds of the world are covered with them), an empty beer bottle (same comment), and a brand new boot. That was the last thing I found, for then I discovered that I was no longer alone.

I never switch off the sonar scan, and even when I'm not moving I always glance at the screen about once a minute to check the general situation. The situation now was that a large object—at least the size of the lobster—was approaching from the north. When I spotted it, the range was about 500 feet and closing slowly. I switched off my lights, cut the jets I had been running at low power to hold me in the turbulent water, and drifted with the current.

Though I was tempted to call Shapiro and report that I had company, I decided to wait for more information. There were only three nations with depth ships that could operate at this

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level, and I was on excellent terms with all of them. It would never do to be too hasty and to get myself involved in unnecessary political complications.

Though I felt blind without the sonar, I did not wish to advertise my presence, so I reluctantly switched it off and relied on my eyes. Anyone working at this depth would have to use lights, and I'd see them coming long before they could see me. So I waited in the hot, silent little cabin, straining my eyes into the darkness, tense and alert but not particularly worried.

First there was a dim glow, at an indefinite distance. It grew bigger and brighter, yet refused to shape itself into any pattern that my mind could recognise. The diffuse glow concentrated into myriad spots, until it seemed that a constellation was sailing towards me. So might the rising star clouds of the galaxy appear from some world close to the heart of the Milky Way.

Even then I was not really frightened. I could not imagine what was approaching, but I did not believe that any creature of the sea could touch me inside six inches of good Swiss armour plate.

The thing was almost upon me, glowing with the light of its own creation, when it split into two separate clouds. Slowly they came into focus—not of my eyes, but of my understanding; and I knew that beauty and terror were rising towards me out of the abyss.

The terror came first, when I saw that the approaching beasts were squids, and all Joe's tales reverberated in my brain. Then, with a considerable sense of let-down, I realised that they were only about 20 feet long—little larger than the lobster and a mere fraction of its weight. They could do me no harm; and quite apart from that, their indescribable beauty robbed them of all menace.

This sounds ridiculous, but it is true. In my travels I have seen most of the animals of this world, but none to match the luminous apparitions floating before me now. The coloured lights that pulsed and danced along their bodies made them seem clothed with jewels, never the same for two seconds at a time. There were patches that glowed a brilliant blue, like flickering mercury arcs, then changed almost instantly to burning neon red. The tentacles seemed strings of luminous beads trailing through the water—or the lamps along a superhighway, when you look down upon it from the air at night. Barely visible against this background glow were the enormous eyes, uncannily human and intelligent, each surrounded by a diadem of shining pearls.

I am sorry; that is the best I can do. Only the movie camera

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could do justice to these living kaleidoscopes. I do not know how long I watched them, so entranced by their luminous beauty that I had almost forgotten my mission. That those delicate, whiplash tentacles could not possibly have broken the grid was already obvious. Yet the presence of these creatures here was, to say the least, very curious. Karpukhin would have called it suspicious.

I was about to call the surface when I saw something incredible. It had been before my eyes all the time, but I had not realised it until now.

The squids were talking to each other.

Those glowing, evanescent patterns were not coming and going at random. They were as meaningful, I was suddenly sure, as the illuminated signs of Broadway or Piccadilly, not the ones that spell out words, but those that form pictures. Every few seconds there would be an image that almost made sense to me, but vanished before I could interpret it. I knew, of course, that even the common octopus shows its emotions with lightning-fast colour changes—but this was something of a much higher order. It was pictorial—or pictographic—communication; here were two living electric signs flashing messages to each other.

When I saw an unmistakable picture of the lobster, my last doubts vanished. Though I am no scientist, at that instant I shared the feelings of a Newton or an Einstein at some moment of revelation.

Then the picture changed, in a most curious manner. There was the lobster again, but rather smaller. And there beside it, much smaller still, were two peculiar objects. Each consisted of a pair of black dots surrounded by a pattern of radiating lines.

I said that we Swiss are good at languages. However, it required little intelligence to deduce that this was a formalised squid's-eye view of itself and that what I was seeing was a crude sketch of the situation. But why the absurdly small size?

I had no time to puzzle that out before there was another change. A third squid symbol appeared on the living screen—and this one was enormous, completely dwarfing the others. The message shone there in the eternal night for a few seconds; then the creature bearing it shot off at incredible speed and left me alone with its companion.

Now the meaning was all too obvious. "My God!" I said to myself. "They feel they can't handle me. One of them has gone to fetch Big Brother."

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And of Big Brother's capabilities I already had better evidence than Joe Watkins, for all his research and newspaper clippings.

That was the point, you won't be surprised to hear, when I decided not to linger. But before I went, I thought I would try some talking myself.

After hanging there in darkness for so long, I had forgotten the power of my lights. They hurt my eyes and must have been agonising to the unfortunate squid. Transfixed by that intolerable glare, its own illumination utterly quenched, it lost all its beauty, becoming no more than a pallid bag of jelly with two black buttons for eyes. For a moment it seemed paralysed by the shock; then it darted after its companion, while I soared upward to a world that could never be the same again.

"I've found your saboteur," I told Karpukhin when they opened the hatch of the lobster. "If you want to know all about him, ask Joe Watkins."

I let Dimitri sweat over that for a few seconds while I enjoyed his expression; then I gave my slightly edited report. I implied —without actually saying so—that the squids I'd met were powerful enough to have done all the damage; and I said nothing about the conversation I'd overseen. That would only cause incredulity. Besides, I wanted time to think matters over and to tidy up the loose ends—if I could.

Joe has been a great help, though he still knows no more than the Russians. He's told me what wonderfully developed nervous systems squids possess—and has explained how some of them can change their appearance in a flash through what amounts to instantaneous three-colour printing, thanks to the extraordinary network of chromophores covering their bodies. Presumably this evolved for camouflage; but it seems natural—even inevitable—that it should have developed into a communication system.

But there's one thing that worries Joe.

"What were they doing around the grid?" he keeps asking me plaintively. "They're cold-blooded invertebrates. You'd expect them to dislike heat as much as they object to light."

That puzzles Joe; but it doesn't puzzle me. Indeed, I think it's the key to the whole mystery.

Those squids, I'm now certain, are in Trinco Deep for the same reason that there are men at the South Pole or on the Moon. Pure scientific curiosity has drawn them from their icy home to investigate this geyser of hot water welling from the sides of the canyon. Here is a strange and inexplicable phenomenon—

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possibly one that menaces their way of life. So they have summoned their giant cousin (servant? slave?) to bring them a sample for study. I cannot believe that they have a hope of understanding it; after all, no scientist on earth could have done so as late as a century ago. But they are trying, and that is what matters.

Tomorrow, we begin our countermeasures; I go back into Trinco Deep to fix the great lights which Shapiro hopes will keep the squids at bay. But how long will that ruse work if intelligence is dawning in the deep?

As I dictate this, I'm sitting here below the ancient battlements of Fort Frederick, watching the moon come up over the Indian Ocean. If everything goes well, this will serve as the opening of the book that Joe has been badgering me to write. If it doesn't—then hullo, Joe, I'm talking to *you* now. Please edit this for publication in any way you think fit, and my apologies to you and Lev for not giving all the facts before; now you'll understand why.

Whatever happens, please remember this: They are beautiful, wonderful creatures; try to come to terms with them if you can.

TO: Ministry of Power, Moscow.

FROM: Lev Shapiro, Chief Engineer, Trincomalee Thermoelectric Power Project

Herewith the complete transcript of the tape recording found among Herr Klaus Muller's effects after his last dive; we are much indebted to Mr. Joe Watkins, of *Time* magazine, for assistance on several points.

You will recall that Herr Muller's last intelligible message was directed to Mr. Watkins and ran as follows: "Joe! You were right about Melville! The thing is absolutely gigan—"

© Arthur C. Clarke 1964

Scientist, lecturer, writer, and photographer, Arthur C. Clarke is never counterfeit. His stories may be fictional but they are never so incredible that they cannot be believed. For some time, Clarke and a partner have been actively engaged in underwater photography of the Great Barrier Reef and the coast of Ceylon. Between adventures, he retires to Colombo to raise the curtain on a world of the future with stories he believes to be both scientifically plausible and factual.

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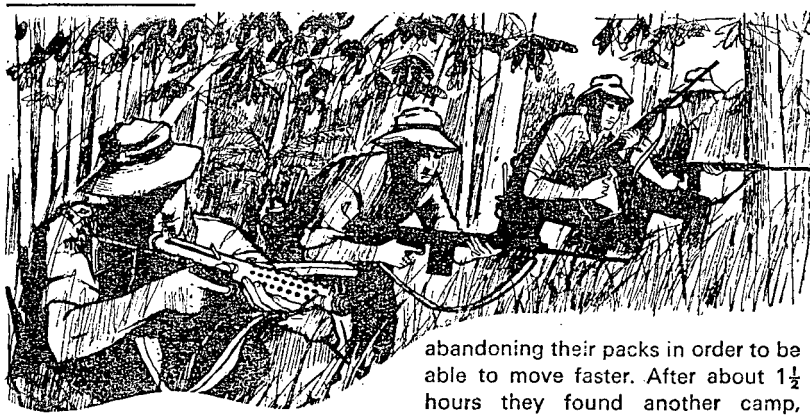

"... COVERED IN 5-6 HOURS A DISTANCE THE ENEMY HAD TAKEN 2 DAYS TO COVER"

Behind the flat words of the official report, a story of drive and resourcefulness

"2nd Lieutenant PEELE was flown in to LONG PASIA with 10 men of his own 6 Platoon. At LONG PASIA they were joined by a further 8 men from 9 Pl and two Border Scouts. At this time it was still thought that the enemy might be 200 plus strong.

"The patrol left at 1745 hrs on 23 Jan and got half way to the enemy camp. They left at first light 24 Jan, reached the enemy camp at 0900 hrs and found tracks leading EAST. They set off up this track at full speed, later abandoning their packs in order to be able to move faster. After about 1½ hours they found another camp, which they estimated to have held about 80, with tracks about one day old leading from it. The patrol pressed on and after about 2 hours they sighted an enemy camp spread along the side of a stream.

"SHOUTED TO HIS GROUP TO CHARGE"

"The time was now about 1300 hrs and as the patrol was, as yet, undetected, 2nd Lt PEELE decided to move a strong cut-off party round to the rear of the camp before he made his assault.

Cpl WALTON with a light machine gun and seven men was told to work his way round and find a cut-off position before the assault went in.

"After about 20 minutes the assault party had got to within 40 yards of the camp when, most unfortunately, an unarmed enemy, who had presumably been attending to the needs of nature, came out of the jungle, by the assault group. Realising that surprise was now lost, 2nd Lt. PEELE shouted to his group to charge firing from the hip. As they broke into the open they were

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fired at by a light machine gun and three or four riflemen. 2nd Lt PEELE continued forward shouting to one group to give covering fire. The LMG was despatched by Pte TINSLEY who subsequently found out that the shot from his rifle had gone right through the tree before killing the gunner who was firing from behind it. The assault group continued through the camp, killing four more enemy, who fired at them on the way. The assault group then returned looking for further enemy, but found none. It appeared that most of the enemy had fled into the jungle in small groups when the assault started.

"The strength of the enemy party was estimated to be about 50/60.

"There is no doubt that by his vigorous follow up the Patrol Commander covered in 5/6 hrs a distance which the enemy had taken at least two days to cover.

His quick, aggressive action succeeded in putting to flight a well armed enemy party killing six, capturing valuable documents, about one third of their weapons and the majority of their ammunition and equipment."

RESPONSIBILITY

This matter-of-fact report was written by the C.O. of the 1st Battalion Royal Leicestershire Regiment. It describes one episode during his battalion's six months' tour of duty in Borneo, where infiltrators and terrorists from Indonesia are trying to disrupt the Federation of Malaysia. It also neatly sums up the responsibilities of independent command that a young officer is trained to take: responsibility for one small but vital operation, responsibility for the lives and welfare of his men, and for keeping their confidence; responsibilities that help to explain why most Army officers will assert that their life is the most rewarding in the world.

HOW TO BECOME A REGULAR OFFICER

If you have a minimum of five passes in G.C.E. two of which are at 'A' level, you are eligible to apply for entry to Sandhurst provided you will be under 20 on entry. Alternatively, if you have G.C.E. 'O' level passes in English Language and two other subjects you may apply to sit for the Army Entrance examination (provided you will be between $17\frac{1}{2}$ and $18\frac{3}{4}$ on 1st May for the May examination, and 1st November following, for the October examination). This applies only until October '65 after which entry will be dependant upon 'A' level passes.

Successful candidates are commissioned after completing the two year course at Sandhurst.

For more details send this coupon to Major R. H. Young, Army Officer Entry, Dept. 020, Lansdowne House, Berkeley Square, London, W.1.

Please send me details of Regular Commissions ☐ *Direct Entry from University* ☐ *Short Service Commissions* ☐

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MILD and BITTER

What two ideas are more inseparable than Beer and Britannia? What event more awfully important to an English colony than the erection of its first brewhouse?

SYDNEY SMITH

Bring us in good ale, and bring us in good ale;
For our blessèd Lady sake bring us in good ale!
Bring us in no browne bred, for that is made of brane,
Nor bring us in no white bred, for therein is no gane,
But bring us in good ale!
Bring us in no befe, for there is many bones,
But bring us in good ale, for that goth downe at ones,
And bring us in good ale!
Bring us in no bacon, for that is passing fate,
But bring us in god ale, and gife us enought of that;
And bring us in good ale!

ANON

Falling in Love

" I do not drink beer but she thinks I am a drunkard. This is because the first sentimental meeting was when it was raining and as I chatted I slipped on mud and fell down into a storm-drain. She ran off without waiting for me to get out. I thought constantly of her.

" When we came together next time it was outside the beerhall again, where I go to the newspaper stall. Turning on my bicycle to greet her, I fell off. This firmly put her mind to the idea that I was a drunkard always, and she spurns me. How can I prove I was sober, and win her? "

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Write her a letter of explanation, and ask friends to assure her that you are indeed a non-drinker. Then take special care next time you meet. Get off your bicycle as soon as you see her, and keep away from ditches.

Tell Me, Josephine

Frothblower

Here with my beer I sit,
While golden moments flit:
Alas! they pass unheeded by:
And as they fly,
I, being dry, sit, idly, sipping here
My beer.

GEORGE ARNOLD, *Beer*

Piggs of themselves

April 15, 1778: My two large Piggs, by drinking some Beer grounds taken out of one of my Barrels today, got so amazingly drunk by it, that they were not able to stand and appeared like dead things almost, and so remained all night from dinner time today. I never saw Piggs so drunk in my life, I slit their ears for them without feeling.

April 16, 1778: We breakfasted, dined and supped and slept again at home. My 2 Piggs are still unable to walk yet, but they are better than they were yesterday. They tumble about the yard and can by no means stand at all steady yet. In the afternoon my 2 Piggs were tolerably sober.

REV. JAMES WOODFORDE, *Diary of a Country Parson*

Trotters Up !

Ye weary travellers that pass by,
With dust and scorching sunbeams dry,
Or be benumb'd with snow and frost,
With having these bleak cotswolds crosst,
Step in and quaff my nut-brown ale
Bright as rubys mild and stale,
'Twill make your laging trotters dance
As nimble as the suns of france,
Then ye will own, ye men of sense,
That neare was better spent six pence.

Inscribed on the inn-sign of The Plough, at Ford, in the Cotswolds

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Lady Macbeth v. the Porter

Once during her engagement, the evening being hot, Mrs. Siddons was tempted by a torturing thirst to avail herself of the only relief to be obtained at the moment. Her dresser, therefore, dispatched a boy in great haste to "fetch a pint of beer for Mrs. Siddons." Meanwhile the play proceeded, and on the boy's return with the frothed pitcher, he looked about for the person who had sent him on his errand, and not seeing her, inquired, "Where is Mrs. Siddons?" The scene-shifter whom he questioned, pointing his finger to the stage, where she was performing the sleeping-scene of Lady Macbeth, replied "There she is." To the horror of the performers, the boy promptly walked on to the stage close up to Mrs. Siddons, and with a total unconsciousness of any impropriety, presented the porter! Her distress may be imagined; she waved the boy away in her grand manner several times without effect. At last the people behind the scenes, by dint of beckoning, stamping et cetera, succeeded in getting him off with the beer, while the audience were in an uproar of laughter, which the dignity of the actress was unable to quell for several minutes.

CHARLES MATTHEWS

Beer Patter

"When I first go into a public-house I go into the tap-room, and say, 'Would you like to hear a tune, gentlemen, or see a dance, or a little bit of amusement?' If they say 'No,' I stand still, and begin a-talking, to make 'em laugh. I'm not to be choked off easy . . . Then after dancing I go to the gentleman who has given me most, and ask him six or seven times 'to give me a copper,' declaring he's the only one as has given me nothing, and that makes the others laugh. I also ask the landlord to give a half-pint of beer to grease my feet, and that makes 'em merry. I generally gets good nobbings (that's a collection, you know) . . . If I gets inside, I'll mop up 1s. if it's good company, or perhaps 3d. or 4d. and always plenty to drink—more than I can take, for I'm generally drunk before I can get home. They never gives me nothing to eat, but it don't matter, for I'm seldom hungry; but 'I like a drop of good beer,' as the song says."

The Whistling and Dancing Boy

HENRY MAYHEW, *London Labour and the London Poor*

Now it's official: Britain's beer drinkers drink "one over the eight" every week. And of all the beer drunk in the world—a record 9,545 million gallons last year—Britons "downed" 1,032 million gallons. That represents 19.3 gallons for every man and woman in the United Kingdom—or nine glasses every week!

Evening Standard, 20 August, 1964

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ROSE

BY GUY DE MAUPASSANT

Maupassant needs little introduction. As with a rare vintage, so with his stories. Read them once, twice, twenty times, appreciation grows as acquaintance deepens. A civil servant —he swore he wrote only for the money—he observed with exquisite perception those small, everyday comedies and tragedies which are the very stuff of living. Portraying always and only that which he knew, and writing with the strength of utter simplicity, he remains Grand Master of short stories, of which Rose is a sparkling choice.

THE two young women looked as though they were enveloped in a flower bed. They were alone in the huge landau, which was loaded with bouquets like a gigantic flower basket. On the seat in front were two little baskets lined with white satin and full of Nice violets; and on the bearskin rug covering their knees a piling-up of roses, mimosa, pinks, marguerites, tube-roses, and orange blossom—all tied with silken favours—almost overwhelmed the two exquisite creatures, permitting only their shoulders, arms, and bodices—the one blue, the other lilac—to emerge from the bright and scented bed of blooms.

The coachman's whip wore a sheath of anemones, the horses' traces were tufted with wallflowers, the spokes of the wheels were clothed with mignonette. In the place of the carriage-lamps were two enormous round bouquets—the queer eyes of the rolling, flowery beast.

The landau sped along the rue d'Antibes at a fast trot, preceded, followed and accompanied, by a crowd of other flower-bedecked

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carriages, full of women lost to view beneath a wave of violets. For it was the day of the Festival of Flowers at Cannes.

They reached the boulevard de la Foncière where the battle of flowers takes place. Along the whole length of the immense avenue a double line of garlanded carriages was going and coming like an endless ribbon. People were throwing flowers from one to the other. They shot through the air, struck at eager faces, fluttered about, then fell into the dust, where an army of urchins picked them up.

A closely-packed crowd, noisy but good-humoured, looked on; it was ranged along the pavement and kept back by mounted police who rode past with an air of brutality, pushing back the curious as if their function was never to permit base peasants to mingle with the rich.

In the carriages, people descried others they knew, called to one another by name, exchanged volleys of roses. A chariot full of pretty girls dressed up like red devils, drew and bewitched all eyes. A young spark, who looked like the portraits of Henry IV, was throwing, with happy enthusiasm, an enormous bouquet held back by a string of elastic. At the threat of a buffet, women hid their eyes and men ducked, but the graceful projectile, swift yet obedient, simply described an arc and returned to its master, who thereupon threw it at a new target.

The two young women emptied their arsenal with bountiful hands and received a hail of bouquets; then, a little wearied by an hour of battle, they ordered the coachman to take the Gulf Juan road which goes by the seashore.

The sun was disappearing behind the Esterel, sketching in black against a west of fire the jagged outline of the long mountain. The calm sea stretched blue and clear to the horizon, where it merged with the sky; the squadron anchored in the middle of the bay was like a herd of monsters motionless on the water, apocalyptical animals, armour-plated and humpbacked, topped with puny masts like quills and with eyes that light up when night falls.

The young women, now reclining under the heavy fur rug, looked languidly around. Said one of them at length, "What a heavenly evening—everything just perfect! Don't you feel that, Margot?"

"Yes, it's a lovely moment; but not, I think perfection. There is one thing lacking, Simone."

"What's lacking? I must say I'm completely happy. I want nothing more."

"Yes? You think so? But however much we just wallow in

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well-being, surely we always desire *something* more . . . something for the heart."

" A trifle of love, perhaps? " said the other, smiling.

" Yes."

They were silent, looking in front of them. Then the one called Marguerite murmured, " Life would seem insupportable to me without that. I need to be loved, if only by a dog. What's more, Simone, we are all like that, whatever you may say."

" No, my dear. I would choose not to be loved at all rather than to be loved by no matter whom. Do you think it would be nice, for instance, to be loved by . . . by— "

She was considering by whom she might well be loved, her glance running over the wide landscape. Having toured the horizon, her eyes fell on the two metal buttons, shining on the coachman's back, and she continued with a laugh—"by my coachman? "

But Madame Margot scarcely smiled. She said in a low voice, " I assure you it is most amusing to have a servant in love with you. That has happened to me two or three times. You'd die of laughter at the comical way they roll their eyes. Of course the more amorous they grow, the stricter you must become; then, one day, on the first excuse to hand, you send them packing, because you would look too ridiculous if someone were to notice it."

Madame Simone listened, her eyes fixed ahead; then she declared, " No, decidedly, the heart of my footman would not, for me, seem sufficient. But tell me—how did you know that they were in love with you? "

" I could see it as with other men—when they start to be silly."

" Other men did not seem so silly to me when they were in love with me."

" Idiots, my dear, incapable of talking or of replying or of understanding anything under the sun! "

" But what did *you* feel—what does it feel like to be loved by a servant? You were what . . . moved . . . flattered? "

" Moved? No. Flattered? Yes, a little. One is always flattered by the love of a man whoever he may be."

" Oh come, Margot! "

" Yes, indeed, my dear. Listen, I'll tell you of a queer experience I once had. You will see how strange and confused our feelings can be in such circumstances.

" Four years ago next autumn, I found myself without a lady's maid. I had tried five or six of them, one after another and all no good, and I was in despair of finding one when I

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read in the small advertisements of a daily paper that a young woman, able to sew, embroider, and do the hair, was looking for a place and that she would furnish an excellent character. As if that weren't enough, she could speak English!

" I wrote to the address given, and next day the girl herself turned up. She was fairly tall, thin, a bit pale, and very shy in her manner. She had beautiful black eyes, a charming complexion and I took to her at once.

" I asked to see her references. She gave me one in English, for she had just left, she told me, the employment of Lady Rymwell, with whom she had been for ten years.

" The letter declared that the young woman had left of her own wish to return to France, and that Lady Rymwell had no fault to find with her during her long service beyond her inclination to *French coquetry*.

" The prim English phrase made me smile a little, and I immediately engaged the woman.

" She came to me that very day. Her name was Rose.

" By the end of the month, I adored her. She was a find, a pearl, a wonder. She knew to perfection how to do my hair, she could trim a hat better than the best milliners, and she could even make gowns like a dressmaker. I was amazed at her versatility. Never before had I found such service.

" She dressed me quickly and with an astonishing lightness of touch. Never did I feel her fingers on my skin, and nothing is more unpleasant to me than the touch of a maid's hand. Soon I was falling into very lazy habits, so delightful was it to allow myself to be clothed from head to foot, and from chemise to gloves, by this tall, shy girl with her rosy blush and her quiet ways. When I got out of my bath she would massage me as I dozed on the sofa. Good heavens—I looked on her as a humble friend rather than as a mere servant!

" Well, one morning, my concierge asked to speak to me with an air of some mystery. I was surprised and made him come in. He was a very reliable man, an old soldier, in fact an old orderly of my husband.

" He seemed embarrassed with what he had to say. At last he stammered, ' Madame, a Chief Inspector of Police has called.'

" ' What for? ' I asked sharply.

" ' He wants to search the building.'

" Doubtless the police are useful, but I hate them. I don't consider that theirs is a noble occupation. And I replied, as much annoyed as dismayed, ' Why this search? What is it all about? He may *not* come in.'

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" ' He claims there is a criminal in hiding here,' went on the concierge.

" This was alarming, and I asked that the Police Inspector should come up and explain himself. He proved to be a reasonably well-bred man, decorated with the Legion of Honour. He excused himself and apologised; then affirmed that I had a gaolbird among my servants!

" I was shocked. I replied that I would vouch for every servant in the house and I went over them one by one, ' The concierge, Pierre Courtin, an old soldier.'

" ' It's not him.'

" ' The coachman, François Pingau, a peasant from Champagne, son of one of my father's tenant farmers.'

" ' It's not him.'

" ' A stableman, also from Champagne, and the son of peasants personally known to me; and the footman whom you have just seen.'

" ' It's neither of them.'

" ' Then, monsieur, you can see for yourself that you are wrong.'

" ' Excuse me, madame, I am quite sure I am not wrong. Since it concerns a dangerous criminal, would you be so kind as to assemble your whole staff here before us.'

" I resisted this at first, then I gave in and made everyone come up, both men and women.

" The Inspector glanced over them, then said, ' This is not everyone.'

" ' Excuse me, monsieur, the only one not here is my personal maid, a girl whom you could not possibly confuse with a convict.'

" ' May I see her, too? ' he asked.

" ' Certainly.'

" I rang for Rose, who appeared at once. Scarcely had she entered when the Inspector made a signal, and two men whom I had not seen hidden behind the door, flung themselves upon her, seized her hands, and bound them with cords.

" I uttered a cry of fury and wanted to leap to her defence. The Inspector stopped me, ' This girl, madame, is a man called Jean-Nicolas Lecapet, who was condemned to death in 1879 for murder preceded by rape. His sentence was commuted to imprisonment for life. Four months ago he escaped. We have been looking for him ever since.'

" I was stupefied, knocked out. I could not believe it.

" The Police Inspector went on, smiling, ' I can give you only one proof. His right arm is tattooed.'

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" The sleeve was pulled up. It was true. The Inspector fellow then added, in pretty poor taste, I thought, ' You can leave the rest of the proving to us! ' And they led away my maid.

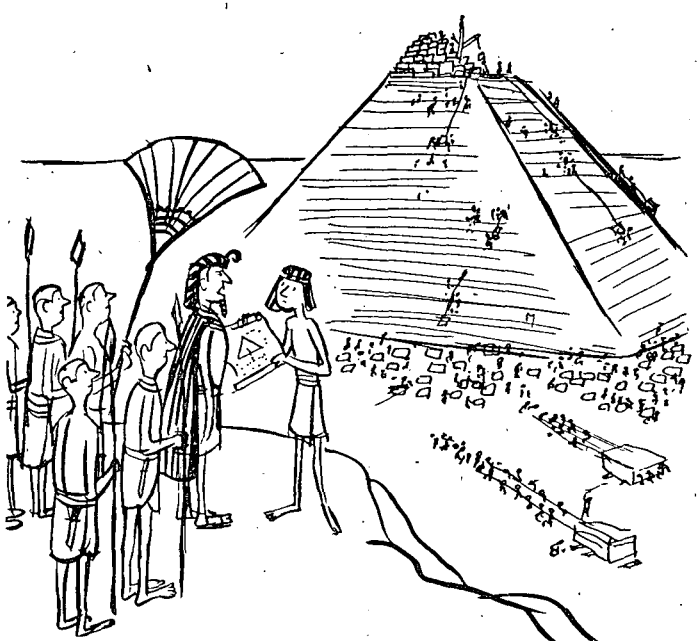
" Ah well, believe it or not, what really gets me in all this was not my anger at having been played with, duped and made ridiculous; nor is it the shame of having been dressed and undressed, handled and touched by this man. It is . . . the profound humiliation . . . humiliation which I feel as a woman. Do you understand? "

" No, not entirely."

" Look . . . think of it! He had been sentenced for rape, this man. Well, I kept thinking of the woman he had raped . . . and that—that humiliates me. There it is. You understand now? "

And Madame Simone did not reply. She was looking straight ahead, with fixed and undivided attention at the two shining buttons on the coachman's livery, her smile the Sphinx-like smile that every woman now and then wears.

Translated by Eric Duthie



" It's nice, but I want to be cremated."

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Bodies with avid faces, faces of pursuers . . .

A SHOCK OF WHITE HAIR

BY DARRELL BATES

"HE wants to see you about the ship," they said. "He says it as if it were a matter of life and death."

"Who exactly is he?" I asked. I was busy and impatient to get on with my work. And it was nearly midnight.

"He is from the ship." I knew that, of course. Among other odd jobs I was the agent for this particular shipping line. "He is a Norwegian, he says."

"Oh," I said. I was beginning to understand. My mother had come from Norway and I had learnt Norwegian as a child. There was no one else in the place, as far as I knew, who could speak the language.

The man had been put ashore that night from one of the ships that called once a month at this out-of-the-way port. The reason they gave was that he was very ill.

"All right," I said in the end. "I'll go."

They had put him in a small separate room at the hospital. "We are going to lock the door," the night sister said, "until the doctor sees him in the morning."

"Why?" I asked.

"There's nothing wrong with him, as far as we can see. Physically, I mean. But from what the people in the ship said, it looks as if he may be mad. They said he went round the ship shouting and screaming in the night."

He was lying on the bed with his head propped on the pillows. His eyes were closed and his arms lay palms upward at his side.

I stood at the end of the bed looking at him. He was a good-looking boy with a lean, browned face and fair Nordic hair.

"It was kind of you to come," he said in Norwegian.

He still hadn't opened his eyes, but he moved his hands as he spoke and put them up to his head. It was then that I saw that

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his hair wasn't fair at all. It was white. As white as an old man's beard.

When I told him that the ship had gone, he turned his head into the pillow and shut his eyes.

"Oh, God!" he said. "Then it's too late."

"What is too late?"

"It doesn't matter now."

"Tell me," I said. "Perhaps I can help."

"No," he said. "There's nothing you can do."

"Tell me about it anyway," I said, trying another tack. "I'd like to hear."

And in the end he told me.

He was an artist, he said. He had some money of his own, and a year ago when he was twenty-four he had left home and started to wander. He came eventually to a small island in the West Indies. He liked it and he stayed there.

"I suppose," he said, "that it was like any other tropical island. There were coconut trees, and sand, and reefs, and sun. But it wasn't the scenery that attracted me. It was the people, and it was the people I wanted to paint.

"It was an island, like many others, that had been often conquered and settled, and conquered and settled again. Until the nature and the features of the ancient race which had originally lived there were submerged in the mixture of invading peoples and colours, and lost. Or almost lost. Here and there, in some old man, or fleetingly in the features of a child, they could still be discerned.

"I searched all over the island for these features, or for traces of them. For the amber-coloured skin of this ancient race, and the almond-shaped wide-set eyes, and the cheekbones high in the face. And bones that were delicate and fragile like . . ." His voice tailed off, and he left the words unsaid.

He was sitting up in the bed now, excited and alive again with the telling of his tale. I looked at my watch, and sighed and went on listening. It was a quarter past one.

"One day," he went on, "someone told me that he knew of an old man with traces of these features. The only snag was, he was in the lunatic asylum. So I went there."

"How did you get in?" I asked. "How did you get permission?"

"It wasn't difficult. The present Government is in the hands of the dark-skinned people who were brought there originally as slaves, and have grown in numbers until it is they

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who now rule. I got to know the friend of a friend of a Minister, and through him I got permission to go to the asylum and to paint there if I wished."

The Norwegian smiled a boyish, untroubled sort of smile. It was difficult to imagine that he was mad, as they had said he was.

"So, as I said, I went there. I saw the old man and made a sketch of him. He wasn't a very good subject, but . . ." The boy spread his hands and smiled again. But when he went on his face was serious and tense.

"On my way out I passed the window of a cell. It was barred but the shutters were open. I turned my head and looked straight into a pair of eyes. I stopped and stared, and the eyes stared back.

"It seemed a long time that I stayed there, until the attendant touched my arm.

"'Come, away' he said. 'Not good. Come.' He tugged at my arm.

"'Who is she?' I asked. The face was, I thought, the most extraordinary and the most beautiful face I had ever seen. It was dirty and smeared with tears and hollow-cheeked, but the high cheekbones were there and the almond-shaped eyes and the amber-coloured skin.

"'Who is she?' I asked again. 'Why is she here?' The attendant wouldn't say anything. He just tugged at my arm, and in his eyes I saw a look of abject fear."

The Norwegian had made inquiries, he told me, through his friend, and eventually he had found out that the girl wasn't in the asylum for any ordinary reason. She wasn't violent and she had never done anyone any harm. No doctor had certified her as insane, or in need of observation. She was there because of a very ancient and unwritten law. She was there because people thought she was a witch.

"'If someone would vouch for her, and see that she never spoke to others or went about, then—' they said, with a spreading of their dark eloquent hands—'then we would let her go. But no one will. No one will.'

"'Not even,' the Norwegian had asked with hopeful strategy, 'not even an educated man?'

"'No,' said the friend of the Minister's friend, untouched by the strategy, 'not even an educated man. Fear goes through a layer of education like a knife through cheese.'

"'If I vouch for her, will you let her go?'

"'Yes,' they said in the end, 'if you will see she never leaves

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the house. 'But,' they added, ' the Minister will probably want a little deposit, as a guarantee, you see . . .'

" So I paid the little deposit and I took the girl."

The night sister came in then and looked anxiously through the door.

" Are you all right ? " she said.

" Yes," I said. " I will stay and talk to him for a while. Could we have some coffee ? "

They brought the coffee, and left the door open to let in some breeze. It was a hot, still night, and there was thunder in the air.

" The girl was very quiet," the boy went on, " and very well behaved. She gave no sort of trouble. When I painted her she would stay still or move her head when I asked her. In fact the only trouble I had was with my neighbours, and with the woman who did the house for me. The woman left a few days after the girl arrived. ' I cannot stay,' she said. She would give no reason, nor after that would any other woman come. So I asked the girl if she would cook and do the house. At the end of the first week I offered her the wages I had paid the other woman.

" ' No,' she said. ' I want no money. It is I who am in debt to you.'

" To begin with, whenever I went out I shut her in a room that was locked and barred, and when she worked in the kitchen or the house I was always there watching her. She never complained, but one day she said, ' I will not run away, you know . . .'

" I didn't say anything. I felt ashamed.

" ' I know they think I am a witch, and that if I am seen outside talking to people they will send me back to that place.'

" After that I didn't lock her door.

" Once, when I was painting her, I asked her if she would take off her clothes so that I could do a nude. But she shook her head, and I didn't ask her again.

" I used to take her for walks sometimes, up in the hills beyond my little house where no one went except the cutters of cinnamon and men in search of wild honey in the trees. And one day two strange things occurred."

The boy leaned forward and clasped his hands round his knees.

" As we were walking along the sandy track the girl suddenly put out her hand and held my arm. She had never done that before or even touched my hand. I turned to look at her, wondering what it was, and in turning my eye caught a movement on the path. A swaying movement just beyond the limit of my foot.

" There weren't many snakes on the island but there was one

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kind that had a lethal bite. And this, I saw at once, was one of them, swaying to strike.

"The girl held my arm. 'Do not move,' she said. She started to talk to the snake, using strange-sounding words that I didn't know, and using an intonation that I had never heard. And slowly the swaying of the snake eased until at last it lowered its head and slid noiselessly into the bush.

"The other strange thing happened on our way back, near to my house. We met a group of women on the path. They stared at the girl, and then one of them put her hand over her face and screamed. The others backed away as we approached, and as we passed they spat. I took the girl's hand and hurried her on. Behind us the women muttered, and one of them threw a stone. I stood between them and the girl until, muttering still, they went away.

"That night," he went on in a voice so quiet that I could hardly hear, "I was reading on my bed when I saw the handle of the door turn, and the door began to move, slowly at first, and then at last with a push until it was fully open. In the doorway was the girl. Her flesh was the same even amber colour as her face, and the bones of her body were as delicate, I saw, and as fragile as a bird's.

"'You can paint me now,' she said, 'if you still wish.'"

It was some time before he said any more. I looked at my watch again and saw that it was after two. But I didn't feel tired or sleepy now. I wanted to hear the end of the story.

"As I said," he continued, "I also had trouble with my neighbours. I had known many of them and they often came to my house to chat, as I went to theirs. But after the girl came, no one visited me. They would talk to me outside on the paths and roads, but guardedly and always with a curious look in their eyes. At least at first it was just curious. Later it became angry and hostile, until one night it turned into something more.

"I was asleep, and then suddenly, for no reason that I could grasp, I was awake. I lay there listening for a sound that might have wakened me. All I could hear was the breathing of the girl in her bed on the other side of the room. I strained my eyes in the darkness but I could see nothing. But I knew somehow that something was there.

"Beside my bed I always kept an oil lamp turned low in case I wanted to get up in the night. I moved my hand slowly towards the lamp and started to turn up the wick. At the first turn, and the first brightening of the light, I saw the man standing

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there only a few feet from my bed. And in his hand was a knife.

"On the other side of the bed was a wooden chair. With a sudden jerk I rolled over and reached for it, and jumped out on to the floor. The man had already started to lunge forward, and I saw the glint of the knife in the light of the lamp. But before he struck, there came the sound of a voice from the bed by the wall, and at the sound his hand froze and he turned his head. The words and the intonation were the same as I had heard that day up on the mountain path when I had nearly trodden on the snake.

"The man stared at the voice and didn't move. There was fear in his face, and the sweat was beginning to form on his neck and on the bare black skin of his arms. And slowly the fingers of his hand went limp and opened and the knife fell with a clatter on the floor.

"In the faint light of the lamp I couldn't see the bed on the other side of the room, but now I saw that the girl was moving across the room out of the darkness and into the circle of light from the low-turned lamp. The man still stared at her, and the voice went on and on. And suddenly it took on a quicker, harsher note, and then . . ."

The Norwegian boy's head fell forward over his knees and his voice faded away. I thought he was ill or something else and touched his shoulder, but after a moment he looked up and went on with his story.

"And then I saw something very strange and very terrible."

He looked at me. "Are you sure you want to hear it?"

"Yes," I said, "go on."

"The man recoiled from the voice as if it were a whip, step by step until his back was against the wall, and the light of the lamp was on his face. He put up his hands against it but soon they fell away, and revealed the beads and rivulets of sweat and the staring eyes, and the open gaping mouth, and the tongue . . . And still the voice went on and on."

The Norwegian had shut his eyes now, and as he talked I could see the perspiration on his brow.

"The eyes stared and bulged until they seemed to move from their sockets, and the tongue hung out over the lips like a panting dog's. And suddenly the man fell limp in a heap on the floor and he moaned like an animal in pain, and there was froth on his mouth and the lips were drawn back over his teeth. And then he started to scream and writhe and shudder until at last it was quiet in the room and there was no more movement on the floor."

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"What happened then?" I asked after a long silence, when it seemed that he had no more to say.

"We left," he said. "We left in the morning. As soon as it was light I went to the home of a Frenchman I knew. He didn't seem to recognise me at first, but in the end he let us in. We stayed there, shut up in the house until the next day, when I knew there was a ship that went to another island."

"Why didn't he recognise you?" I asked.

"Because my hair had gone white. It used to be, before that night, as dark as yours."

I looked at him for some time. Perhaps it was nightmares, I thought, and not any madness that had made him go round the ship at night shouting and screaming.

"So you left the island; what happened to the girl?"

"I took her with me," he said, "to the other island. We stayed there until I could get money for the journey back to Europe. But when I boarded the big ship, the one that came into the harbour here, they wouldn't let her travel in the same part of the boat with me, because of her colour, nor me with her. And when they took me off the ship and put me ashore I was in a sort of coma so that I couldn't tell her and she didn't know . . ."

I saw now why he had asked to see me so urgently and so desperately, and why the first question he had asked was about the ship.

"Perhaps we can get in touch with her at another port, or perhaps—" I hesitated for a moment, watching his face—"or perhaps it might be better if we didn't."

He didn't say anything, but I could see from his face what his answer was.

It was nearly four o'clock by the time I left the hospital and got back to my house that night. I put the car away in the garage and walked up the path towards the door. There was a moon that made quick sharp shadows out of the trees and racing clouds that as quickly blurred them. As I walked up the path the moon emerged and shone on the figure standing by the door. The hair and the cotton frock were drenched in water as if they had just come out of the sea.

"They told me to come here," she said. "They said you would know where he was."

The moonlight for a moment showed up the amber-coloured skin, then the clouds raced in again and I could only see the outline of the figure waiting there that was as delicate and as fragile as a bird's.

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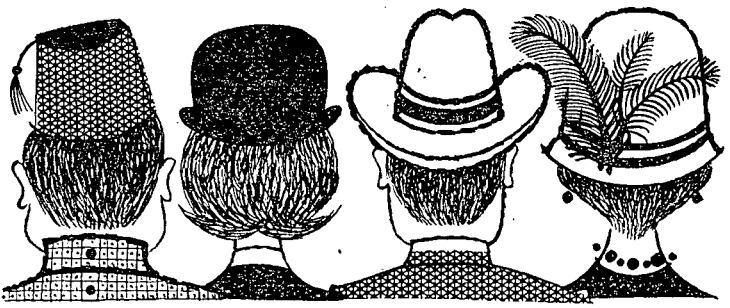

You meet such interesting people!

I sometimes feel a little uneasy about that imagined self of mine—the Me of my daydreams—who leads a melodramatic life of his own, quite unrelated to my real existence. So one day I shadowed him down the street. He loitered along for a while, and then stood at a shop-window and dressed himself out in a gaudy tie and yellow waistcoat. Then he bought a great sponge and two stuffed birds and took them to lodgings, where he led for a while a shady existence. Next he moved to a big house in Mayfair, and gave grand dinner-parties, with splendid service and costly wines. His amorous adventures in this region I pass over. He soon sold his house and horses, dismissed his retinue of servants, and went—saving two young ladies on the way—to live a life of heroic self sacrifice among the poor.

I was beginning to feel encouraged about him, when in passing a fishmonger's, he pointed with his stick at a great salmon and said, " I caught that fish." LOGAN PEARSALL SMITH, *Trivia*

Much Nicer People

Old old lady,
why have you bolted your door?
We don't want people tracking our carpets
with dust and dirt any more.
Old old lady,
why have you drawn your blinds?
My sister and I make much nicer people
entirely in our minds.

ELIZABETH J. COATSWORTH, *The Creaking Stair*

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The Duke

Charles had succeeded to the throne in March of this year, and now was about to marry by proxy the little Henrietta Maria, sister of Louis XIII. Buckingham was sent to bring her home. He arrived in Paris in May . . .

It was Buckingham's intention to dazzle Paris and the French court with the gorgeousness of his dress. He succeeded.

"His Grace hath for his body twenty seven rich suits embroidered and laced with silk and silver plusches, besides one rich white satten uncut velvet suit, set all over both suit and cloak with diamonds, the value whereof is thought to be four score thousand pounds, besides a feather made with great diamonds, with sword, girdle, hat-band and spurs with diamonds; which suit his Grace intends to enter Paris with.

"The other rich suit is of purple satin embroidered all over with rich orient pearl; the Cloak made after the Spanish fashion with all things suitable; the value whereof will be twenty thousand pounds, and this is thought shall be for the wedding day in Paris. His other suits are all rich as invention can frame, or art fashion. His colours for the Entrance are white and watchet, and for Wedding, crimson and gold."

MEA ALLAN, *The Tradescants*

Just in Time . . .

A pretty sneaking knave I knew
O! Mr. Cromek, how do ye do?

WILLIAM BLAKE

His Antonia!

"Compose yourself, Antonia. Resistance is unavailing, and I need disavow my passion for you no longer. You are imagined dead; society is for ever lost to you. I possess you here alone; you are absolutely in my power, and I burn with desires I must either gratify or die; but I would owe my happiness to yourself. My lovely girl! My Antonia! Nay, this struggling is childish," he continued, "no aid is near . . . Love and opportunity invite your giving loose to your passions. Yield to them, my Antonia! yield to them, my lovely girl!"

Heedless of her tears, cries, and entreaties, he gradually made himself master of her person, and desisted not from his prey, till he had accomplished his crime and the dishonour of Antonia.

MATTHEW LEWIS, *The Monk*, 1796

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Mary of Scots

She was skilled in music and the dance
And the old arts of love,
At the court of the poisoned rose
And the perfumed glove,
And gave her beautiful hand
To the pale Dauphin
A triple crown to win—
And she loved little dogs
And parrots
And red-legged partridges
And the golden fishes of the Duc de Guise
And a pigeon with a blue ruff
She had from Monsieur d'Elboeuf.

Master John Knox was no friend to her;
She spoke him soft and kind,
Her honeyed words were Satan's lure
The unwary soul to bind.
" Good sir, doth a lissom shape
And a comely face
Offend your God His Grace
Whose Wisdom maketh these
Golden fishes of the Duc de Guise? " . . .

Consider the way she had to go.
Think of the hungry snare,
The net she herself had woven,
Aware or unaware,
Of the dancing feet grown still,
The blinded eyes—
Queens should be cold and wise,
And she loved little things . . .

MARION ANGUS

Then there was Aunt Sarah Shoaf, who never went to bed at night without the fear that a burglar was going to get in and blow chloroform under her door through a tube. To avert this calamity—for she had a greater dread of anaesthetics than of losing her household goods—she always piled her money, silverware and other valuables in a neat stack just outside her bedroom, with a note reading: " This is all I have. Please take it and do not use your chloroform, as this is all I have."

JAMES THURBER, *My Life and Hard Times*

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His heaviest burden had been a fountain pen

REST YOU MERRY

BY JERRARD TICKELL

ALEXANDER STITT slid open the door of an empty first-class compartment in the Brighton train, entered and slammed it behind him, as if defying humanity at large to disturb his solitude. He put his overcoat on one seat, his hat on another, his umbrella on a third, and his suitcase on a fourth. Over the only other available seat, he spread a sheaf of bilious political weeklies and, entrenched behind these barricades, sat down and scowled at the corridor.

His was a distinguished literary scowl. Over the years, he had carefully cultivated that famished vegetarian look which, he considered, went well with mordant prose. He had a down-drawn mouth and cold blue eyes which struck chill on their beholder. So patrician was his profile that an avant garde Scandinavian sculptress had persuaded him to sit for her and had exhibited his bust in the Royal Academy.

Alexander Stitt was a vain bachelor of fifty. His vanity had been steadily accumulating since the publication of his first book, a waspish but witty indictment of the English preparatory school system. This book, *Hornet's Hive*, had been widely reviewed and extravagantly praised by those who liked taking a vicarious swipe at their late pastors and masters. He had followed his initial success with another book, even more waspish but slightly less witty, on the public school system—*Burnt Toast* (15s. net)—and then by another on the English Universities. He attacked the Church, the Law, clubland and the middle classes to which he belonged.

With the publication of each book, his vanity mounted as his sales declined. He had never married because he took Nietzsche's view that women were lesser creatures and one did not permanently ally oneself to one's intellectual inferiors.

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That day, Alexander Stitt had lunched with his publisher to discuss the manuscript of his latest work, *Suburban Sluts*. It had been a splendid luncheon; melon, grouse, claret, stilton, and vintage port. Over the brandy, his host had delivered a shattering blow. Kindly but firmly, he had rejected *Suburban Sluts*.

The taste of the public had sharpened, said his publisher, and the poison-tipped arrows of the younger satirists were more deadly than Stitt's somewhat familiar bludgeon. He was sorry. No doubt, he went on, using the time-honoured formula, he would regret his decision when some other publishing house made a mint of money out of the book. But it was not for Benson & Normand.

"Have a little more brandy," said his publisher.

"Yes, please," said Mr. Stitt thickly.

Outraged and incredulous, he had bought a first-class ticket to Brighton, there to brood—alone. The year was drawing to its close. The wind off the sea would be damp and he detested the only sort of hotels he would be able to afford from now on. For the first time in his life, Mr. Stitt found cause to question the theories of Nietzsche.

The guard's whistle blew. The train began to glide out of the station. Just as it reached the end of the platform, the door of the compartment was wrenched open to admit a cheerful and rubicund gentleman in a navy-blue suit, an Albert watch chain, and a bailiff-like bowler hat. As he stood swaying with ominous geniality, it was apparent to Alexander Stitt that the newcomer had been drinking and was in search of both company and conversation. He smothered a hiccup before he spoke.

"Seats all took, chum?"

In forbidding silence, Mr. Stitt removed his umbrella from the seat in the far corner.

"Ta, chum."

The intruder sat down heavily. There was comparative silence until the train rattled over the points of East Croydon when, with much puffing and blowing, he relit the ragged end of a cigar. Mr. Stitt was about to point out acidly that this was a non-smoking compartment but stopped just in time. The smell of cigar smoke was preferable to that of stale alcohol and he did not want to give this—this person any conversational opening whatsoever.

"Bin a nice day."

It had not been a nice day. It had been a disastrous day, a

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day of lasting humiliation. The words his publisher had used were utterly final and painful in the extreme. Mr. Stitt's famished vegetarian look became even more pronounced as he contemplated a bookless and friendless future. Was he, who had been described by the BBC as a "contemporary thinker," to hawk his manuscript from door to door? Such a course of action was unthinkable.

But, at fifty, what else could he do? To start a new career at his age would be well nigh impossible. And, in any case, what sort of employer would look with favour on an elderly, rejected writer?

The train had covered several more miles before Mr. Stitt's travelling companion made the next move. He produced a capacious flask from his hip pocket and rose a little unsteadily to his feet. With the conviviality and gregariousness of the slightly tipsy, he thrust the flask towards Mr. Stitt.

"Help yourself, chum. Cheer yourself up. 'Laugh and the world laughs with you; weep—and you weep alone.' Shakespeare."

"Ella Wheeler Wilcox," said Mr. Stitt in automatic correction.

"Same thing. It's the thought that counts."

"It is by no means the same thing. A span of centuries as well as a difference in sex—" He stopped. Why involve oneself with this illiterate, intoxicated boor? "And I will not 'help myself,' thank you. Nor can I recommend you to do so." He sniffed. "I have unusually sensitive nostrils and I should have imagined—"

"You're dead right. I don't mind confessing I *have* had a couple." He went on confidentially, "There was a bit of a do afterwards. Sherry wine, port wine, *and* seedcake. Traditional, as you might say."

He sat down and tapped Mr. Stitt's knee. "By the way, my name's Mr. Rook. Same as our feathered friends. Mr. Arthur Rook, that's me. When I was a kid, they used to call me Birdie. May I have the pleasure of knowing your name, chum?"

"My name is Alexander Stitt. It is *not* 'chum.'" Mr. Stitt drew a deep breath. "My purpose in undertaking this journey—"

"Your purpose in what?"

"In undertaking this journey . . ."

"That's what I thought you said. It's fate," said Mr. Rook, "that's what it is. May I have your name again?"

"I am Alexander Stitt. My purpose in undertaking this journey was to achieve a measure of peace and quiet. I have had a considerable shock today and without wishing you any discourtesy, I beg of you to—"

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"Stitt? Stitt? Now lemme see. I've heard that name somewhere. Rings a bell, as they do say."

Alexander Stitt was aware of a first, faint flicker of interest. Was it possible that this garrulous and vulgar person was actually literate? He doubted it. In the most unlikely event of it being true, it would at least be a breath of air in the pricked balloon of his self esteem. He lowered his paper.

"And may one ask, pray, in what connection is my name familiar to you?"

Mr. Rook scratched his chin and frowned. "That's what I'm trying to think. Seen it somewhere. Maybe on an account rendered. No. It wasn't that. I'm a liar. But I seen it. Definitely."

"Do try and think, Mr. Rook. It—it would mean a great deal to me at this moment if you were to remember."

Mr. Rook's eyes focused with some difficulty on Alexander Stitt's sombre features, it seemed almost with approval. The train fled through Haywards Heath. At last, Mr. Rook shook his head.

"No. It's no good chum. It's gone. No. Wait a minnit. I'm a liar. It's come back." He chuckled. "It wasn't Stitt I was thinking of. It was Kitt. Rhymes with Stitt, see? Easy." He hummed a few inaudible bars, something about cannot take it with you, when you go, while, for the second time within a few hours, Mr. Stitt's heart sank into his hand-sewn shoes. Was he to be spared no humiliation on his calamitous day? For a "contemporary thinker" to be confused with a popular female singer was surely the last straw. But Mr. Rook was talking again.

"You'll pardon my curiosity, but may I ask what you do to earn your living? You in a bank or something?"

"Certainly you may ask. I am not in a bank. I am a writer of satirical fiction." Alexander Stitt sighed. "At least, I *was*."

"Down on your luck, chum?" asked Mr. Rook with what seemed like strange eagerness.

Why should he confide in this impudent stranger? On the other hand, why not? They would never meet again and there might be a certain masochistic pleasure to be derived from stripping the Elastoplast of silence off his wounded pride.

"Yes," he said. "That is an apt—if colloquial—summing-up of the situation in which I unexpectedly find myself."

This answer seemed to afford Mr. Rook the greatest satisfaction. He leaned forward and said confidentially, "Lissen to me, chum. I don't mind telling you that I've had a good week—owing to the cold spell and the fog. There's nothing like a cold spell

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followed by a bit of fog for business. Now, as the poet says, you and me are like ships that pass in the night so there'll be no offence meant or taken if I was to offer you a little proposition. Twelve quid a week basic plus overtime and tips and a Christmas bonus. You'll pardon me but with that face of yours—well, all I can say is that you're a natural. Wotsay?"

Mr. Stitt passed his hand across his noble forehead.

"Are you, a stranger, offering me a salaried post purely by virtue of my appearance?"

"That's right. Subject to references and, between you and I, we can stretch a point there. I never seen anyone more suited to the job."

Throughout his long and diminishing literary career, Mr. Stitt had never had a regular income. He had rather despised those who did, considering them mere bowler-hatted wage slaves. But now, he realised with gloom, he had the best of good reasons for wishing to join their ranks. Twelve pounds a week was little enough in all conscience—but there was overtime and a Christmas bonus. Mr. Rook had also used the pleasing but ominous word "tips." One naturally associated tips with manual work.

Mr. Stitt looked at his hands with their tapering fingers and manicured nails. He sighed. Up to now their heaviest burden had been a fountain pen.

He said with a return of his grand manner, "As to credentials, I imagine that a glance at a certain famous reference book should satisfy you as to who is who. May one now inquire as to the nature of your business and the work you would require me to perform?"

"Sure, chum. I'm a Funeral Director, Undertaker and Certified Embalmer. Patronised by the Nobility and Gentry. Night and Day Service. Promptitude, Sympathy, and Civility—that's us. What I want is a coffin-bearer and I want him bad. Alf Clark who's bin with me this twenty years and more got took off last Monday with the bronchitis and I'm in a proper hole—if you'll pardon my little joke—with old Lady Kingsway Beaver likely to go any minnit."

"You would require me to assist in carrying coffins in and out of churches of various religious denominations?"

"That's right. With that mug of yours, the mourners would be scared *not* to tip you. As the old song has it, your face is your fortune."

Alexander Stitt sat back in his seat.

Though he appeared to gaze at Mr. Rook, his eyes saw another image. They saw the avant garde Scandinavian sculptress in

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her smock and they saw his likeness being slowly fashioned out of what had been a shapeless mass of wet clay. What a long, flattering time she had taken over his forehead, his nostrils and his sensitive, crescent mouth, tirelessly seeking perfection.

That picture of creation faded and was replaced by another. He saw Opening Day at the Royal Academy . . . and a little knot of fashionably dressed women grouped around the head of Alexander Stitt and he heard their murmured praise. They had used words like " arresting," " dynamic," " a satirical essay in clay," and, most pleasing of all, " a veritable twentieth-century Cassius."

All that these features qualified him for now was the carrying of the coffins of the dead.

The years had rendered Mr. Stitt's scowl so rigid that his rare and fleeting smiles had only been achieved by deliberate muscular effort. But now, to his surprise, he felt the corners of his mouth twitch and lift involuntarily. He was aware of a curious tickling feeling inside, one he was unable to suppress.

His scowl became a smile. His smile became a grin. His grin widened. Suddenly it exploded into uncontrollable laughter. So unaccustomed were his vocal cords to the task of uttering these hilarious gusts that Mr. Stitt half choked. He rolled about in his seat, beating the cushions with his clenched fists, emitting bellow after bellow of mirth while his stomach ached, his lungs strained and his eyes streamed.

" Har, har, har," barked Mr. Stitt, " Har, har, har, *har* . . ."

Mr. Rook gave a startled glance at the communication cord. But the train was slowing down and would stop in less than a minute. He made a stealthy movement towards the door.

Still helplessly har-har-haring, Alexander Stitt struggled to his feet. In between bursts of laughter, he managed to get the words out. " I . . . I accept with the . . . the greatest of pleasure. Har, har, har. When do I start? "

The train stopped at Brighton.

Mr. Rook said briefly, " You don't start, chum. You've laughed yourself out of the job."

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Nose and ears told his master danger waited

TWO AGAINST TERROR

BY MARGARET CRAVEN

FROM the big old ranch house John Ferrer saw his Basque foreman coming from the corrals. Ancelito had worked twelve years for him and twenty-two for his dad. Ancelito had known his grandfather when old Miguel could no longer trail the sheep through the ponderosa and the sugar pine, but spent his last summer on the rock beneath the oak because he still found a house too confining and a chair too soft for comfort.

He came steadily, direct as a sheepdog bringing the ewes to his master. He wore his best jacket and a hat, and when Ancelito came thus on the evening of a workday it was for one reason only—to plead clemency for one of his young herders. John knew which one and hardened, waiting for the knock.

"Come in, Andy," he said. "Please sit down."

Ancelito came in, but he did not sit. It is difficult for a Basque to beg, even for another. In his country of Eskualherria, which is no country at all but parts of southern France and northern Spain, the house of every man is a noble house, and his rights were protected before the Magna Carta was an idea in the mind of any man.

"The boy is back," he said simply.

"You found him asleep in a ditch, I suppose, or under a bush?"

"I found him in the back room of the tavern at the crossroads. My friend Pietro had been kind enough to cover him with a quilt."

"He's no good."

"He is twenty and far from home. He came from the Spanish Pyrenees just after the Natividad, and we put him to work that very night. He worked well in the cold and the rain, in the long nights of the lambing. Is this not true?"

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"He worked well for four months, and if he spoke a word, I never heard him. And then what did he do? He deserted it. He lifted the bota so high and so often he ended up drunk in a tavern."

"Ez—ez—ez," protested Ancelito. "He did better than that. When he realised that a herder from another ranch had filled the bota with a strange hard liquor, saying it was a wine of the Norteamericanos, he stayed on his feet long enough to knock out four teeth."

"This Baskie's no good."

Ancelito despised the word "Baskie." He never even used the word Basque. He was an Eskualduna. He sat down slowly, and he looked at John steadily.

John knew the look well. He had seen it often enough in the eyes of his old sheepdog, Lady. She was twelve now and still working, though she stiffened a bit on the long drives. When a ewe stomped in her face, she fixed the ewe with the look Ancelito was giving him now. Then she walked up slowly, lifted her right paw, gave the ewe a sound smack on the nose and penned her. He must be careful or Ancelito would pen him also and shut the gate.

"I won't have drunkenness and brawling among my men."

"But Juanito," said Ancelito gently, using the diminutive he had used when John was very young, "it was so small a fight. No bones broken. No sheriff. No lawsuit. Not like the other one here on your own ranch."

"Another? One of my own men? Why didn't you tell me?"

"One of your very own. He told me himself. He was sitting on the rock under the old oak, and even then in his last summer it pained him to remember the loneliness of that first year. He said the fight was his last farewell to the boy in him who had to grow up too fast and too soon. You have forgotten?" He stood up. "You will see the boy?" he asked slowly.

"Yes, Andy. Send him over."

He had not forgotten. He simply had never known about the fight. There was too much he had never known. As a small boy he had loved his grandfather, but secretly had been a little ashamed because he was so different from the grandfathers of the other boys at school. He had been ashamed of the language old Miguel spoke when he came down from the hills, and he'd been glad when his father had Americanised the family name into one his friends could pronounce and spell. It was only when he was older that he had come to realise his was a double heritage, twice precious, and it was then he had put to his

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grandfather his question. "Grandfather, how was it when you came here as a boy?"

Through the window he saw the boy, Esteban, coming and heard again the answer. Fundamentally it had not changed much. It had been for the young Miguel as it was for this one. It had been so hard he had screened it with the same altivéz, that wonderful and dreadful Basque quality which we can only approximate with our word "pride."

When the boy knocked and entered, the man was standing. The boy waited as if he expected to be cut into little pieces and was determined to take it without apology or explanation. And when the man spoke, his words lashed not the boy but himself.

"It was my fault," he said. "I am to blame. I put you to work too soon. I forgot that the other herders have been here for many years. I forgot what it means to leave one's homeland and one's people. Sit down, Esteban."

They both sat.

"Ancelito tells me that when my grandfather came, he was in a brawl much worse than yours. I did not know. But I remember he told me once he let his beard grow that first summer in the mountains, and when he drove the sheep down in the autumn, he looked so fierce the children were afraid of him and hid under the beds. He said he felt like a Cagot. You have heard of them?"

For the first time some emotion flickered in the boy's face. "They could not appear in public places," he said slowly, "or marry or mingle at the church. They could not kiss the cross, and nobody knew why."

"Lepers maybe, or descendants of the Saracens. For hundreds of years, until they were absorbed by the race, they were the outcasts of the homeland. My grandfather felt like a Cagot, and I had forgotten."

He took out his pipe and filled it. "I am sending you on the long summer drive with a sheep band. Lady will go with you, but you will need a second dog also, and this is a problem. We're short of dogs."

He stood up and walked to the door, the boy beside him. "Tomorrow you and Ancelito will take the rams to the big yearly sale in Sacramento. Then we will go to the ranch of a friend who trains dogs. He may have one we can use. If he does, you will have to learn the commands in English until you can teach the dog your own words. Can you do this?"

"I can do it," the boy said eagerly.

"Then until tomorrow, Esteban."

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Ancelito was waiting in the early dusk. "You have seen almost a miracle," he said. "You have seen a rich North American as proud as you put down his pride and bend to you. Is this not true?"

And it was true. The boy walked beyond the corrals into the soft May night. Homesickness had been an agony within him, and he had run from it. He could admit it now. Now he could think of home.

How many times he had walked with his own grandfather beside the oxcart and sat with him under the big umbrella that stood at its rear, sharing the lunch of sausage and cold omelet. And the green valleys, the cows with their long curving horns, the creaking of the wooden wheels that made so fine a chirrio it could be heard far away. Now he could think of his mother.

When he was very small and frightened in the night by some loud noise, his mother had always come to him, and she had said, "Go back to sleep. It is only the Laminak."

The Laminak were the little stubby-fingered ghost people of his homeland. By day they spied on the grown-ups, and by night they tried to duplicate their actions, breaking the crockery and dropping the furniture, and wailing horribly with frustration.

Now he knew that in his homesickness the small boy in him had wailed louder than any Laminak, and he could bend to the boy who already was stepping back into the past . . .

The next day he and Ancelito loaded the rams into a truck and accompanied John Ferrer to the ram sale. Esteban helped unload the rams and drive them into a pen to await auction. When their turn came, he tapped them gently with a sheep hook, sending them into the ring like a corps de ballet, wheeling and turning together so the bidders could see how fine they were.

Then he was free. He stood alone by a barricade, watching and listening to the chant of the auctioneer, and he heard the soft tones of his own tongue, which is like a chant also. Old friends were greeting one another on the other side of the fence. Their rams were not selling quite so well, they said. Their lambs were smaller this year. Their taxes were higher.

"And how is your grandson?" one voice asked, and Esteban turned to see the man who answered. He wore a suit like those of the rich North Americans and on his white head a blue beret, which meant he was a French Basque. And in his voice was the old pride, but with a difference. "He is doing well, Fermin. He is in the last year at the university. He wants to be a doctor."

One son for the church, and one for the sheep. This was the saying in Esteban's village. Not for his own sheep on his own

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land, of course. To migrate to one of the Americas and herd another man's sheep. But these Eskualdunak were speaking of their own rams and their own lambs and their own taxes—and of a grandson who could choose to be a doctor. And this was also almost a miracle.

Then Ancelito beckoned. They returned to the truck and followed John Ferrer through the city and deep into the flat valley to see the friend who might have a dog. When at last they turned into a driveway, the friend came to meet them, two Scottish border collies at his heels.

They were black with white markings and a faint touch of brown, smaller and shorter-haired than the usual collie. They had the leanness and alertness of sheepdogs. They had ears attuned to every intonation of the master's voice. They had eyes so highly trained that when the wind was wrong and the voice could not reach them, they could see a step to the right, a lifted hand at half a mile, and take their order.

John Ferrer and his friend spoke in English, and when they began to discuss the dogs, Ancelito translated the words so the boy could follow.

"You might be able to use this one, John," the friend said, motioning to the older of the two dogs. "He knows his job, and he'll do it. But he's predatory. He's a sly one."

"He pulls wool?"

"Worse than that. When he knows he's out of sight, he'll lure a ewe over the hill and break the windpipe."

"He's a killer. That's almost unforgivable."

"Almost. Last year we had to use him. Couldn't get along without him. I gave orders the herder must never let him out of his sight. Worked well."

"And the other?"

"I'll give him away. He's no good."

"What's the matter with him?"

"He's just no good. Never saw a smarter puppy. Began training him at three months with a piece of rubber attached to a cord at the end of a stick. Ten minutes a day, and he'd have the lesson second time round. Then I trained him on a band of range sheep."

"And he's no good?"

"He's mechanical. Doesn't like livestock."

"What does he like?"

"Other dogs. Nothing but other dogs."

They both looked at the dog as if he were indeed beyond hope.

"Of course, he's still young. He's only eighteen months old,

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and you know how it is. Sometimes a dog will be worthless for two years and then find himself."

"You think he might?"

"Well-l-l—it's possible. If he grew fond of a herder and knew that when he did well it pleased him. He's sensitive. Can't punish him much. You want to see him work?"

They did, and the friend took Tonto—which is Spanish for "fool"—into a field and whistled him out to bring in some old ewes and lambs.

The dog went out fast and well to the left. He came in behind the sheep, not too far, not close enough to scare them. He hunkered down, one old ewe watching him warily, and he brought them in straight and gently. When one ewe started to break and the friend called out, "Take care," the dog headed her back with a clean, quick turn; and when he had delivered the sheep to his master, he waited, as a child waits to be praised.

"He has an eye," John said.

"Oh, he shows off well. I'll say that for him. But when it's a hundred and ten in the shade, he doesn't want to work."

"Neither do I," and they both laughed.

Then the friend said soberly, "You know the danger, John. He'll do well until he's bored, and he'll hear a dog call somewhere back in the pines, and he'll desert."

"Well, Esteban," John Ferrer said finally in Spanish. "It's your choice, and it's a tough one. Which do you want?"

The boy spoke quickly and surely, "Este," and he chose Tonto, the one, like himself, who found it hard to grow up.

Ancelito had worked dogs with English commands. He went over them carefully with the sheepman who had trained Tonto so that he could teach them to Esteban. Then they started back to the home ranch, the dog at Esteban's feet.

In the evenings that followed, John Ferrer could hear Ancelito drilling the boy. His friend had learnt his first lessons in the training of sheepdogs from a Scotsman and retained some of the old orders. These Ancelito gave to Esteban with the smell of the heather still on them.

"Come up ahint," Esteban would say over and over, which meant come up behind. "Come in," come closer to the sheep. And a splendid, loud "hist" to stop the dog.

"Steady" . . . "take care" . . . "get over" . . . "keep back" . . . "stop there"—the boy practised until he was sure of each one. Later in the high range he would replace them gradually with Basque commands, and since the most modern Basque words go back to the time when Latin was a spoken

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tongue and the oldest words are sheep terms and go further into antiquity than any man knows, even if Tonto never made a sheepdog, he was bound to be a very erudite failure.

The boy did not let Tonto roam. He fed him, kept him beside his bunk at night, played with him and made friends with him. Just once he worked him with a group of sheep, John and Ancelito watching, the boy sure of his orders, the dog obeying.

"He is putting himself into the dog," John said. "And if he fails, it will break his heart."

"If he fails," said Ancelito philosophically, "he will make a man of himself trying."

Now the wild grass had dried. An ancient engine hauled thirty freight cars on to the siding to take the bands to the mountains, the air filled with the baaing and the bleating of the sheep, the barking of the dogs, the calls of the herders.

The bands were kept separate, and when it came time to load Esteban's, Tonto nosed the sheep towards the chute, but it was Lady who loaded them into the cars. When they stopped in the chute, refusing to enter the ramp, and tried to turn back, she needed no orders. Into the chute she went, working her way under the sheep, turning them as she wished them to go, and when some old ewe refused to budge, she gave her a sound smack on the rump or showed teeth in her face.

When the sheep were loaded and the herders resting in the caboose and the wheels clacking on the track, it was Ancelito who paid the little old sheepdog, Lady, the highest compliment a man can pay a female. "She thinks like a man," he said. "And what is more natural? So did her father."

One summer when the sheep were still driven home from the mountains over the old trails, a mountain lion had frightened a hundred ewes deep into the hills. The herders and the dogs could not find them and had to go on without them. But the father of Lady had stayed behind. He found the sheep, and he kept them together, and brought them fifty miles safely home without a herder. It took him five days.

"What a pity he is gone, Esteban," said Ancelito. "If he were still alive, he could teach Tonto for you."

"When we see you again, Esteban," said another of the herders, "you will be a foot shorter. You will have chased so many sheep over mountains your feet will be worn to the knee."

They were teasing him to make him fight better in the test that was coming, and Esteban, looking very proud, did not answer them.

At dawn the sheep bands were unloaded from the cars, and

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when Esteban had packed his supplies on his burro, he waited his turn, the two dogs at his side.

Lady stood close and quietly. Once she touched his hand with her soft nose as if she were saying, "Now don't worry. You have me. I will be like a wife who has been married so long and so happily she need never ask, 'Do you love me?' because she knows it well."

But Tonto waited impatiently, and when Esteban cautioned him to be still, his eyes were questioning. "To command me you must command yourself, and can you?" No anger must show. The voice must be always encouraging and hopeful. When he thought of it, Esteban turned his head so that Tonto could not see his doubt.

Then it was their turn. Ancelito gave the directions and promised that the camptender would bring supplies by truck every other day. The band was spilt into the sage. The burro led the way, Tonto and Lady driving the sheep away from the train.

When Esteban saw the great rolling country with its green buckbrush and occasional pine, he felt hope. So few places for sheep to hide and a chance to build the bond between him and his dog—a bond invisible to any eye and yet so strong the lives of the sheep would rest upon it, and his honour, and his pride.

It was fun at first. The nights were cool. The days were sunny. Tonto found the smells delicious; this was a dog's life, and he went into it with his nose sniffing and his tail wagging. Nothing to do but trot along beside Lady circling the sheep, scattered over a square mile, and keep them from straying. And each day the man played with him. There was the game of the stick, the man holding it out as he came forward, Tonto grabbing it with his teeth and learning to walk backwards. There was the exciting running game in which he learnt to take an order on the run instead of stopping and looking back. And there was the game in which Tonto must jump on a sheepskin nailed on a wobbly log and balance there. When he did well, the praise was always effusive, and the bits of liver which rewarded him were delectable. So the man became the master, and the master became a kind of god.

Esteban had no time to be lonely. He was up before dawn, swallowing his first coffee, well sopped in bread. He was on the move until his second, his real, breakfast. And all day he must watch the dog lest he crowd the sheep, quick to stop any false move before it could develop into a habit.

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Sometimes at the nooning-up, the sheep chewing their cud, the day's lesson over, and Tonto asleep, Esteban would sit musing and talking to Lady.

"Tell me, wise one, how do you think he's doing?" he would ask, and the old lady's eyes would answer, "Surely you know a parent cannot buy loyalty from a child with bits of liver."

At night Esteban kept Tonto in his little tent beside his bedroll, because he dared not let him stray.

For six weeks they worked their way through the rolling sage and the buckbrush, and the bond grew and strengthened.

Then the weather changed. The rain fell in a slow, persistent drizzle. The sheep woke early, restive to be off. Lady's rheumatism bothered her, and for the first time Esteban sent Tonto out alone.

After a week of rain they came to a river which must be forded. The water was cold, and the sheep refused to enter it. Again and again Tonto and Lady drove them to the edge, the awkward old ewes breaking and darting off to be rounded up again. It was a day of utter frustration, and when at last the river was crossed and the band bedded down for its first night in the juniper forest, Tonto pouted, the first rebellion in his eyes.

In the juniper forest the weather cleared. The lambs were frisky and the ewes so delighted to be warm and dry again that they took pleasure in thinking up tricks. On the second afternoon thirty ewes hid themselves in a small ravine, and Esteban, knowing they were there, sent Tonto after them. He came back with twelve.

"Can't you count?" asked Esteban, and sent him back again—and again, until he had brought every one.

At the next nooning-up Esteban and Lady discussed matters. "He works well when it's easy," said her eyes, "but surely, Esteban, you know you are coming to the first time of testing, and how will he do then?"

They worked their way higher and higher into the ponderosa and the sugar pine. Once, lightning struck a nearby tree and frightened the sheep, and the rocks were so sharp they cut the feet. And in the distance Esteban could hear sometimes the sounds of campers, and he was always listening for what he dreaded, for what he knew would come.

He heard it at night in his little tent with that part of him that was watchful even in sleep. He dragged himself up and awake and heard it again—faint and clear in the night, a dog was calling. When he spoke Tonto's name sharply there was no answer.

Tonto was gone all the next day. Esteban and Lady held the

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sheep in the same grazing grounds and waited, and that night, the sheep bedded down, Tonto returned.

He did not come tail down, afraid to hold up his head. He came proudly, with a splendid indifference, and he sat down by the fire and looked at the boy.

Esteban stood up slowly and motioned Tonto to come to him, and the dog obeyed. In some strange way Tonto was himself back there in the office of the ranch house and the boy was the sheepman. He held out his left arm. When he struck, the blow was so sharp it made the face wince. But he struck not the dog but his own arm. Then he reached down and pinched the dog's ear once, and sharply. "You have done wrong," he said, "and I have hurt you. But first I hurt myself."

He put out Tonto's food. He did not touch or speak to him again. When he had eaten, Esteban motioned him to the tent.

Once in the night Esteban felt a cold nose touch his hand. The wind blew gently, and from far away in the pines it brought the call of the bitch. Tonto whimpered and lay still, and when the boy awakened, the dog was still there.

The next week a bear made a shambles of their camp; each day he followed the sheep band, keeping hidden among the pines, and each night he came to the bedgrounds for the joy of killing some fat ewe.

Now Lady took a hand in Tonto's training. When he smelled the bear coming and whined for her to wake up and help with the night prowling, she refused, feeling her years.

Instinct taught him now to bark and awaken Esteban to the danger. For the first time he knew he was responsible for the sheep, and when he and Esteban had failed to find the bear in the dark, he learnt to paw the man awake so the bear would not be warned off by his barking.

When the bear had killed three ewes in four nights, Esteban did something Ancelito had told him he must not tell the forest ranger. He made a bait of bacon, setting and triggering his gun so that with the first bite the bear would shoot himself. And when he and Tonto rushed out at dawn to find the bear dead, they were as pleased as conspirators who share a deep secret.

In July the rams were brought in, and in August the sheep bands were gathered in a mountain valley, the ewes culled and the lambs separated into the fats and the feeders. Then Esteban headed back for the high range.

His way led through country which had been logged two years before, desolate and ugly, and when the camptender came with

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his pack mules, his voice was serious. When some of the loggers had gone, they had left their dogs behind to forage for themselves. The dogs had formed a pack with others deserted by hunters, and the pack preyed on the sheep bands. Esteban must be careful.

"You can trust your dogs?" the camptender asked him.

"I can trust both dogs," answered Esteban staunchly.

Nevertheless he felt a growing fear. He drove the sheep as hard as he dared. Once in the night he heard dogs barking far away, and he heard Tonto whimper softly.

"Even against your own kind could you be faithful?" he asked him, and found no answer.

The next day it thundered and rained. The sheep were as troublesome as sheep can be. When they were bedded down and night fell, Esteban could feel danger waiting in the dark.

No owl hooted. No small animal scurried in his quest for food. The night was too still and the old lady knew it and for the first time in many nights she accompanied Tonto in prowling the bedgrounds.

Esteban did not sleep. He had oiled and cleaned his gun. He took it from its sling, and he sent Lady to circle the bedgrounds from the left, while he and Tonto circled from the right.

Slowly—round and round—they went, but the beam of the searchlight revealed nothing hidden in the fallen timber. Only Tonto's nose and ears told Esteban he had been right and danger waited. He stayed close by Esteban's side and whimpered a little, as if he knew exactly what danger waited and what Esteban expected of him, as if he hesitated at so hard a choice.

Thus they prowled without a bark or a command, and when the night held all its darkness just before the first faint light began its daily tug of war, the pack struck.

Esteban heard nothing, but Tonto did and shot forward. At the same instant Lady barked. Then the night turned hideous with the baaing and bleating of the sheep, the snarling of the dogs, and the report of Esteban's gun.

When Esteban reached the other side of the bedgrounds, the pack was gone as fast as it had come. Three ewes lay dead with their windpipes broken. Already Lady was rounding up the sheep that had scattered in fright. And Tonto was lying very still with a deep gash in his side.

Esteban kneeled beside him, and though he did not know it, his words were those spoken by el Cid, the bravest knight in all Christendom, when he lay dying and said good-bye to the horse that had carried him in battle. "Caro amigo—dear friend."

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He carried Tonto back to the camp. He cleaned and bound the wound as best he could, and in the morning when the sheep were on the move he carried Tonto until the tender found them, and helped rig a sling to take the dog out.

Each time the camptender came thereafter, Esteban waited for news of the dog of whom he could not speak because he cared so much. "The North American took Tonto to the hospital at the university at Davis," the camptender told him. "He has had four blood transfusions. He is as important as a man."

And again, "He misses you, Esteban. When the North American took him home, he had to find an old jacket of yours on which the dog could lay his head."

Lady did the best she could. She even tried to be young again and playful, as Tonto had. And sometimes at the nooning-up they spoke of him.

"Little grandmother, will he work again? Will he forget everything he knows? Will he be afraid? Will he be good for anything better than chasing butterflies and his own tail?"

And Lady would look up from her soft, wise eyes as if she were saying, "Who knows, Esteban? You know how it is with the young. When they're little, they step on your paws. When they're bigger, they step on your heart."

It was as if Esteban waited to rejoin part of himself. If he were not whole again, how could he hope that he would be strong enough to take his own rams to the big yearly sale and speak proudly of a grandson at the university? Would he, too, be like so many who never succeeded, who were afraid to return to the homeland, who said, "Next year I will go home," over and over all the rest of their lives?

Autumn came. The nights grew colder. The first snow fell. The sheep bands were driven from the high range to the road where double-decker trucks waited to carry them back to the valley.

There was a difference now in the way the other herders treated Esteban. He was one of them, and they seemed to know it by something they saw in his face.

"We will take you to the Basque barbecue," they told him. "You will hear the old songs and see the old dances. And we will introduce you to the prettiest girls of them all."

But on the long drive down from the mountains Esteban was silent. His truck was the last to arrive, and when he climbed down, John Ferrer and Ancelito were waiting and with them Tonto, the dog barking and wriggling with joy as Esteban hugged him.

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"I want you to drive your band through this field to the one beyond," John Ferrer told him, and in the field to be crossed was already a sheep band. Esteban sent Lady to drive this band into a corner of the field and hold it there. Then he ordered Tonto to drive through his own band without mixing the two.

There was nothing mechanical about the dog now. He drove the band through gently with no barking, no false move. He hunkered down and nosed the sheep forward, watchful for any sudden break, not once looking back for an order.

From the fence John Ferrer watched, and he felt that quickening of the heart every sheepman feels when he sees a dog and a herder so attuned that none of the work shows, only the smooth and flowing skill.

Just at the last Tonto had a bit of trouble. When most of the sheep had passed into the field beyond, several old ewes stood crosswise in the gate and refused to budge, the last hundred sheep mobbed behind them.

Tonto knew exactly what to do, and he did it expertly. He ran up along the side of the sheep, cutting in just behind the leaders. Then he turned and came back through the middle of the sheep so that to get out of his way they were forced to flow round him and through the gate.

When the sheep were all through, Esteban closed the gate, while Tonto waited. Not for flattery. Not for a titbit of liver, but as one partner waits for another. And Esteban stooped and put his hand on his head, and he said, "Well done."

Then they started back where John Ferrer stood, Esteban first, Tonto trotting at his side, head turned, eyes watching, ears listening.

Thus they came proudly—the man and the sheepdog. Behind them, like a grandmother at a graduation, walked Lady.

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SOLUTION to ARGOSY CROSSWORD (NOVEMBER ISSUE)

Across. 1, *Postprandial.* 9, *Midas.* 10, *Transit.* 11, *Moot.* 12, *Imp.* 14, *Stork.* 15, *Orgeat.* 18, *Hearse.* 19, *Ring.* 21, *Yea.* 22, *In a nutshell.* 25, *Ind.* 26, *Chow.* 28, *Grains.* 30, *Spiral.* 31, *Storm.* 33, *Ins.* 35, *Eyes.* 36, *Piratic.* 37, *Dozen.* 38, *Lamentations.*

Down. 1, *Patronymic.* 2, *Shanghai.* 3, *Pisgah.* 4, *Asti.* 5, *Damp.* 6, *Amos.* 7, *Littoral.* 8, *Matron.* 13, *Mark Twain.* 16, *Teenage.* 17, *Peahens.* 20, *Goldilocks.* 23, *Newsreel.* 24, *Libretto.* 27, *Hotdog.* 29, *Spirit.* 32, *Myna.* 33, *Isle.* 34, *Spot.*

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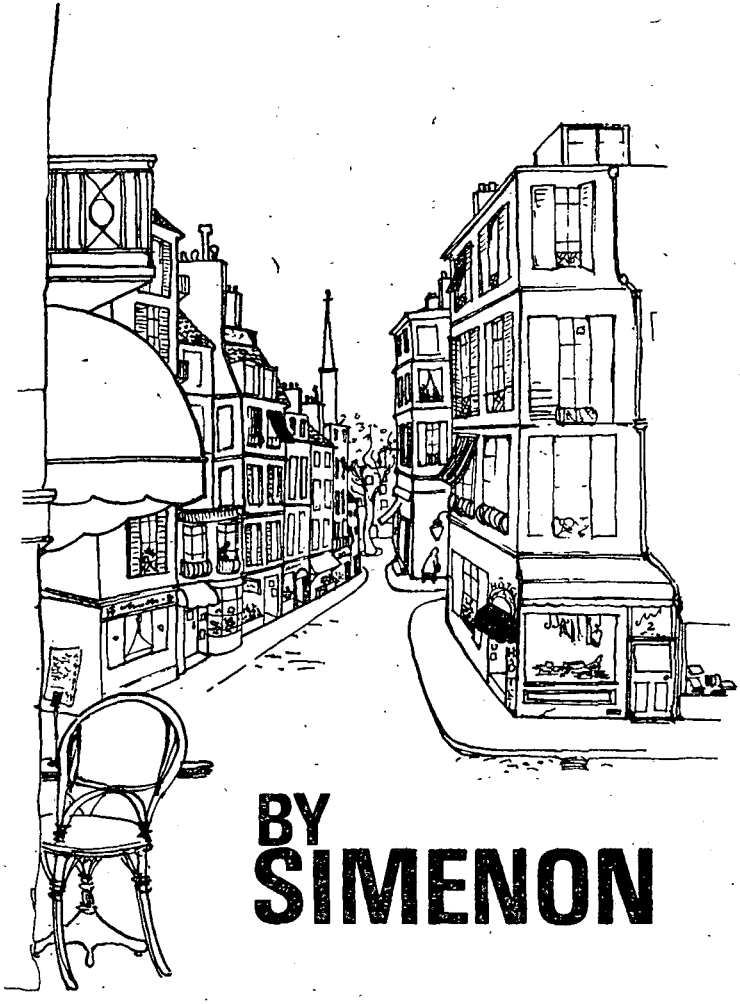
STAN THE KILLER



BY SIMENON

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Maigret felt something about this case just didn't seem to fit . . .

MAIGRET puffed at his pipe as he walked along slowly, hands clasped behind his back. It was not a simple matter to push his heavy body through the morning mob in the rue Saint-Antoine, where a bright sun poured down on carts and baskets of fruits and vegetables, blocking almost the entire width of the pavement.

It was marketing time—salesmen in white aprons, the smell of cheese here and a whiff of roasting coffee there; the ping of cash registers and the distrustful glances of housewives . . . and in the midst of it all, the slow heavy progress of Maigret, on one of his most tormenting cases.

Across from the rue de Birague there's a little café with only three tables in front of it, called the Barrel of Burgundy. There Maigret settled himself, like any other weary passer-by. He did not even look up at the tall thin waiter who came for his order.

"Small white Mâcon," he muttered—and who was to guess that this occasionally inept new waiter at the Barrel of Burgundy was otherwise known as Detective Janvier?

The waiter returned with the wine precariously balanced on a tray. He wiped the table with a questionable cloth, and was even so clumsy as to drop a scrap of paper on the floor. Maigret picked it up as he left, and read:

The woman's gone out marketing. No sign of One-Eye. The Beard left early. The three others must still be in the hotel.

At ten in the morning the crowd was getting even worse. Next to the Barrel, a grocer's shop was having a sale, and barkers kept entreating the passers-by to sample biscuits, cake, and country cheeses.

At the corner of the rue de Birague you could see the sign of a dingy hotel, *Rooms by the month, week, or day. Payment in advance.* With doubtless intentional irony this rat-trap had chosen to call itself the Beauséjour.

Maigret sipped at his light dry white wine and stared apparently aimlessly at the teeming crowd in the spring sun. But his gaze soon settled on a window in the first floor of a house in the rue de Birague opposite the hotel. At that window a little old man sat by a canary's cage and seemed to have no interest in life but to

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bask in the sun for as long as the Lord should deign to leave him alive.

And this old gentleman, who took no notice of Maigret, was Sergeant Lucas, aged by some twenty years.

All this constituted a state of siege which is more commonly known to the police as a stake-out. It had lasted six days, and at least twice a day the Inspector came around for the latest news. At night, his men were relieved by a patrolman, who was actually a detective from the Judiciary Police, and a young woman who contrived to walk the streets without ever picking up a customer.

The crowd shoved by so close to the tiny terrace of the Barrel of Burgundy that Maigret found himself constantly obliged to pull his legs back under his chair. And now, as he did so once more, he suddenly realised that a man had sat down unnoticed at the same table. He was a little man, with red hair and sad eyes, whose mournful face had something of the clown about it.

"You again?" the Inspector grunted.

"I beg you to forgive me, Monsieur Maigrette, but I am certain that you will eventually accept the proposition which—" He broke off to say to the waiterly Janvier—"The same as my friend."

He had an extremely marked accent. He presumably suffered from throat trouble, and he constantly chewed at a cigar-shaped object impregnated with creosote.

"You're getting on my nerves!" Maigret burst out. "Will you kindly tell me how you knew I'd come here this morning?"

"I did not know."

"Then why are you here? Are you going to try to convince me that this is an accidental meeting?"

"No."

The little man's yellow eyes gazed around him, staring into emptiness. He spoke in a sad voice, unvarying in pitch, as though perpetually offering condolences.

"You are not nice to me, Monsieur Maigrette."

"That isn't answering my question. How do you happen to be here this morning?"

"I followed you."

"From Headquarters?"

"Long before that. From your home."

"So you admit you're spying on me?"

"I am not spying on you, Monsieur Maigrette. I have far too much respect and admiration for you! I have already stated to you that I shall one day be your collaborator . . ."

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And he sighed nostalgically, contemplating the artificial ash of painted wood which tipped his creosote cigar.

THERE'd been nothing about it in any of the papers save one; and that one, which had got the tip from lord knows where, uniquely complicated the the Inspector's task.

. The police have reason to believe that Stan the Killer's gang of bandits are at this moment in Paris.

It was true enough, but silence would have been more helpful.

In four years a gang of unknown foreign nationals had attacked five farms, always in the North of France, always with the same methods.

In each case it was an isolated farm, run by elderly people. The crime invariably took place on the night of a market day; the chosen victims were always those who had sold a good number of fowls and animals and had a large sum of cash in hand.

Nothing scientific about the procedure. Brutal attack, as in the days of the highway robbers. Absolute contempt for human life. These bandits killed every human being they found on the farm, even down to the children; it was the one way of making sure they could never be identified.

Were there two of them? Or five, or eight?

In every case neighbours had noticed a small truck. One twelve-year-old claimed he had seen a one-eyed man. Some asserted that the killers wore black masks. Whatever the facts, one thing was certain: every inhabitant of each farm had had his throat sliced.

This was no business of the Paris police. This was up to the mobile units in the provinces, who worked on it for two years without remotely clarifying the mystery—a failure which did not reassure the countryside.

Then a report came in from Lille, from a colony of Polish miners. The report was vague enough; it was impossible even to establish its ultimate source.

" The Poles say that this is Stan the Killer's gang . . ."

But when the police tried to question the coal miners one by one, the men had never heard of it, or muttered, " Well, they told me . . ."

" Who's ' they ? ' "

" I don't know, I forget . . ."

Then came the crime near Rheims. There the gang overlooked a servant girl sleeping in the attic, who became the first survivor.

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She had heard the murderers talking in a language she thought was Polish. She had seen masked faces through a hole in the boards, but had noticed that one of the men had only one eye and that another, a giant of a man, was extraordinarily hairy.

And so the police had come to refer to them as "Stan the Killer," "The Beard," and "One-Eye." For months nothing more turned up, until a detective on the hotel squad made a discovery.

His territory was the Saint-Antoine district, and in a hotel in the rue de Birague he observed a suspicious group which included a one-eyed man and a giant whose face was literally covered with hair.

They were seemingly poor people. The bearded giant and his wife rented a room by the week; but almost every night they gave shelter to several compatriots.

Although everything was strictly hush-hush—the next day one newspaper printed the story. The day after that Maigret found a letter in his mail—clumsily written in an almost childish hand, full of mis-spellings, on the cheap sort of paper sold in grocery stores:

You won't ever get Stan. Look out. Before you can take him, he'll have time to kill off plenty more.

The letter was no hoax, Maigret was certain; it *felt* right. It had the filthy aftertaste of the underworld.

"Be careful," the chief advised. "Don't rush into an arrest. The man who's cut sixteen throats in four years won't hesitate to scatter a few bullets around him when he sees he's done for."

Which was why Janvier had become a waiter and Lucas a basking old man.

The noisy life of the quarter went on with no suspicion that a desperate man might at any moment start firing in all directions... And then Michael Ozep appeared.

HIS first meeting with Maigret had been four days ago. He had arrived at Headquarters and insisted on seeing the Inspector personally. Maigret had let him wait a good two hours; but the little man was undaunted. He entered the office, clicked his heels, bowed, and extended his hands, "Michael Ozep, former officer in the Polish forces, now teacher of gymnastics in Paris—"

The Pole spoke so volubly and with so pronounced an accent that it was sometimes impossible to follow him. He explained that

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he came of very good family, that he could not go back to Poland to retrieve his property, and that he had sunk to depths of despair because even now he still could not accustom himself to leading a mediocre life.

" You understand, Monsieur Maigrette—" (it was impossible to wean him from that pronunciation) " —I am a gentleman. Here I am forced to give lessons to individuals of no culture and no education. I am a poor man . . . I have decided to commit suicide."

A nut, Maigret thought to himself. An astonishing number of the unbalanced feel the need of confiding their problems to the police; he was used to such visits.

" I tried it three weeks ago. I threw myself into the Seine but the river squad saw me and pulled me out."

Maigret invented a pretext to step into the next office and phoned the river squad. The story was true.

" Six days later I tried to gas myself, but the postman came with a letter and opened the door. I truly *want* to kill myself, do you understand? My existence has lost all value. A gentleman cannot consent to live in poverty and mediocrity. Therefore I thought that you might have need of a man like me . . ." Ozep paused.

" For what? "

" To help you to arrest Stan the Killer."

Maigret frowned. " You know him? "

" No. I have heard talk about him. As a Pole, I am indignant that a man of my people should so violate the laws of hospitality. I should like to see Stan and his gang arrested. Among those who go to arrest him, some will certainly be killed. Is it not better then that it should be I, since I already desire to die? "

All Maigret found himself capable of saying was the traditional formula, " Leave your address. I'll write you a letter."

Michael Ozep had a furnished room in the rue des Tournelles, not far from the rue de Birague. The report of the investigating detective was in his favour. He had indeed been a second lieutenant in the Polish forces, but after that his trail vanished. In Paris he taught gymnastics and his suicide attempts were genuine.

Nevertheless Maigret sent him an official letter ending:

. . . deeply regret that I cannot take advantage of your generous proposition, for which my most sincere thanks . . .

Twice since then Ozep had appeared at the Quai des Orfèvres, insisting on seeing the Inspector. The second time he refused

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to leave, claiming he could wait as long as he was obliged to.

And now Ozep sat there, at Maigret's table, in front of the Barrel of Burgundy.

" I wish to prove to you, Monsieur Maigrette, that I am of some use and that you can accept my services. I have been following you for three days, and I am in a position to tell you everything that you have done during that time. I know too, that the waiter who just brought my wine is one of your detectives and that there is another at the window across from us."

Maigret clenched his pipe furiously between his teeth and kept his eyes turned away from the Pole, who went on and on in his monotonous voice. It wore Maigret out merely to listen to him, especially since the accent so distorted each syllable that he had to concentrate to follow the sense.

" You are not a Pole, Monsieur Maigrette. You do not speak the language. I earnestly desire to help you; for I cannot see the good name of my native land tarnished."

The Inspector was beginning to choke with anger. The former second lieutenant could hardly fail to observe the fact, but he continued nevertheless, " If you try to capture Stan, what will he do? He has two, maybe three revolvers in his pockets. He fires at everybody. Who knows how many ladies he wounds? How many little babies he kills? Then people will say that the police—"

" Will you shut up? "

" Now as for me, I am resolved to die. No one will weep for poor Ozep. You say to me, ' There is Stan! ' and I follow him as I have followed you. I wait for the moment when there is no one near us and I say, ' You are Stan the Killer! ' Then he fires at me and I shoot him in the leg. By the fact that he shoots me, you have your proof that he is Stan and you are not making a blunder. And since he is crippled by my shot—"

" Supposing I have you arrested? " Maigret broke in crudely.

" Why? "

" To get a little peace! "

" What would you say? What has poor Ozep done in violation of the laws of France which he wishes only to defend and for which he is offering up his life? "

" Stuff it! "

" I beg your pardon? Are you agreeing? "

" Not in the least."

At that moment a woman went by, a woman with blonde hair and a clear complexion, recognisably a foreigner. She was carrying a shopping bag and was heading for a butcher's shop.

Maigret was following her with his eyes when he noticed that

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his companion had suddenly started to mop his brow with an enormous handkerchief.

" That is the mistress of Stan, is it not? " Ozep asked.

" Will you be quiet? "

" You have convinced yourself that this is the mistress of Stan, but you do not know which one is Stan. You think it is the one with the beard. Now the bearded one is called Boris. And the man with one eye is Sasha. He is not a Pole, he is Russian-born. If you should investigate them yourself you will learn nothing."

No housewife shopping in the confusion of the rue Saint-Antoine could suspect the subjects being discussed on the tiny terrace of the Barrel of Burgundy. The blonde foreigner was buying chops at a nearby butcher's stall; in her eyes there was something of that same lassitude that lay in the eyes of Ozep.

" Perhaps you fear you may be called to account if I am killed? In the first place, I have no family. In the second place, I have written a letter in which I state that I alone, and purely of my own volition, have sought this death . . ."

Poor Janvier stood on the threshold trying to think of a way of telling Maigret that there was a telephone message for him. Maigret noticed the ambiguous pantomime, but went on watching the Pole and puffing forth little clouds of pipe smoke.

" Listen, Ozep."

" Yes, Monsieur Maigrette? "

" If you're seen again anywhere around the rue Saint-Antoine, I'll have you arrested! "

" You are refusing this offer which I—? "

" Get out, or I'll arrest you here and now! "

The little man rose, clicked his heels, bowed almost double, and executed a dignified retreat. Maigret had noticed one of his detectives nearby; now he signalled the man to follow the peculiar teacher of gymnastics.

At last Janvier could deliver the message. " Lucas just phoned. He's spotted that they have guns in the room. Five Poles slept in the next room last night, leaving the door open between. Some of them had to sleep on the floor . . . Who the devil was that character you were talking to? "

" No one . . . How much? "

Janvier slipped back into character, pointing at Ozep's glass.

" You're paying monsieur's bill . . .? "

Maigret took a taxi to Headquarters. At the door of his office he found the detective who had set out after Ozep.

" You lost him? " he roared. " Aren't you ashamed of yourself? I give you the most childish job of shadowing and you—"

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" I didn't lose him," the detective murmured humbly.

" Where is he? "

" Here."

" You pulled him in? "

" He pulled me."

For Ozep had, indeed, headed directly for Headquarters, where he had placidly installed himself and his sandwich in the waiting-room, after announcing that he had an appointment with Inspector " Maigrette."

THERE's no kudos in paper work; but there may be the solution of a case.

Unwillingly, irritatedly, Maigret was adding up in one report in his own large handwriting the various information obtained in two weeks' siege of the gang.

When he set down the facts in order, he could see even more easily how very little they had learnt. They did not even know precisely how many individuals belonged to the gang. The earlier reports, from the people who had seen or thought they had seen the bandits near the time of the attacks, stated that there were four of them, sometimes five. It was probable that they had other accomplices, who cased the farms and markets beforehand. That brought the number to six or seven, which seemed to correspond roughly with the number who hung around the nucleus in the rue de Birague.

There were only three regular tenants, all of whose papers seemed to be in order:

1. Boris Saft, the one the police called The Beard, who seemed to live as man and wife with the pale blonde.
2. Olga Tzerewski, 28, born in Vilno.
3. Sasha Vorontsov, known as One-Eye.

Boris the Beard and Olga occupied one room, Sasha One-Eye the next; the door between was always left open.

The young woman did the shopping every morning and cooked the meals on a gas stove.

The Beard rarely went out, but spent most of his days stretched on the iron bedstead, reading Polish language newspapers which he had one of the gang buy for him at the newspaper kiosk in the Place de la Bastille. Once the errand boy brought back an American fact-detective magazine in addition to the newspapers. They all read that.

One-Eye went out often, always followed by one of Maigret's detectives. A fact of which he was probably aware, since he never

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did more than take long walks through Paris, stopping in many bars but never speaking to a soul.

As for the rest, they were what Lucas called " the floating population." People came and went, always the same lot, four or five of them. Olga fed them, and sometimes they slept on the floor overnight. There was nothing odd about this; it happens in many hotels with poor clientèle—exiles who get together to rent a room and then put up any of their compatriots they come across.

On the floating population Maigret had a few notes:

1. The Chemist, so called because he had tried to obtain a job at a chemical plant. His clothes were badly worn, but rather well cut. For hours he would wander around the streets of Paris like a man looking for any way to earn a little money; and once, for a whole day, he was employed as a sandwich-man.

2. Spinach, named after his implausible spinach-green hat which seemed even more unlikely in view of his faded pink shirt. Spinach went out particularly in the evenings, when he picked up tips opening car doors in front of the Montmartre bars.

3. Puffy, a fat, wheezy little man, better dressed than the others.

And there were two others who visited the hotel less regularly; it was hard to say if they belonged to the gang.

Maigret stared at the notes with the exasperated feeling that the most important detail was somehow eluding him. Finally he picked up his pen again and wrote: *These people give the impression of penniless foreigners, looking for any kind of work at all. But there's always vodka in the rooms, and sometimes impressive spreads of food. Maybe the gang knows it's being watched, and is putting on an act for the police. If one of them is Stan the Killer, it is probably either The Beard or One-Eye. But this is only guesswork.*

It was without the least enthusiasm that he brought his report to the chief.

" Nothing new? "

" Nothing specific. I'd swear the rascals have spotted one of our men and are simply amusing themselves, seeing how often they can come in and go out on innocent errands. They know we can't keep a large section of the force mobilised on their account for ever. Time's on their side; they have lots of it . . ."

" You have a plan? "

" Look, chief. You'll hear people say I'm waiting for inspiration; they couldn't be more wrong. What I'm waiting for is the one significant happening that never fails to turn up. The whole thing is being there when it does turn up so that I can take advantage of it."

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" So you're waiting for a—happening? " the chief smiled. He knew his man.

" This much I'm convinced of: this *is* Stan the Killer's gang. Because of that fool reporter who keeps hanging around here they're on their guard. Now what I want to know is, why did Stan write to me? Perhaps out of sheer bravado. These killers have their pride—you might almost say, professional pride. But which of them is Stan? And why that nickname? It's more American than Polish.

" You know how I take my time before I reach any conclusions. Well, it's beginning to come . . . The last two or three days I've begun to get the feel of the psychology of these boys. Very different from French murderers.

" They need money, not to have a fling in the night spots, or to clear out of the country—but just simply to live their own lives, which to them means doing nothing, eating, drinking, sleeping, spending their days stretched out on a bed, smoking cigarettes, gossiping, and killing bottles of vodka.

" The way I see it, after their first crime they lived like this until the money ran out; then they got ready for another job. Whenever the funds are low, they start again, coldly, without remorse, without a trace of pity for the old people whose throats they cut—and whose life's savings they eat up in a few weeks or months . . . And now that I've got the feel of it, I'm waiting. The happening may even be here already."

" Where? "

" In the waiting-room. The little man who calls me Maigrette and who wants to help in the arrest, even if it costs him his skin. He claims it's just another method of suicide."

" A crackpot? "

" Could be. Or an accomplice of Stan's who's using this method of keeping in touch with what we're doing."

Maigret emptied his pipe by tapping it gently on the window-ledge, so that the ashes fell somewhere on the Quai des Orfèvres, perhaps on the hat of a passer-by.

" He bothers me, that little man," he added. " I've seen his face somewhere. It's not in our files, but I've seen it. And I've seen the girl, too, the blonde; she's worth remembering."

The chief leaned forward. " We've been going on the assumption that the blonde is Stan's mistress. You associate her and the little man. You see the possible implication? "

" That my little man is Stan himself? Could be."

" Are you going to accept this man's offer? "

" I think so." The Inspector headed for the door. He felt

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he'd said enough. " You'll see, chief. I'll be amazed if we still need the stake-out by the end of this week."

And it was Thursday afternoon now . . .

SIT down. Doesn't it get on your nerves to suck at that filthy creosote cigar all day? "

" No, Monsieur Maigrette."

" That ' Maigrette ' of yours is beginning to get me down. However, let's get to business. Now tell me, are you still set on dying? "

" Yes, Monsieur Maigrette."

" And if I told you to go up to One-Eye and fire a bullet into his leg, you'd do it? "

" Yes, Monsieur Maigrette. But you would first have to give me a revolver. I am a poor man and—"

" Now suppose I tell you to go to The Beard or One-Eye and say you have important information—that the police are coming to arrest them? "

" Gladly, Monsieur Maigrette. I shall wait until One-Eye passes by in the street and then I shall perform my commission."

The lowering gaze of the Inspector had no effect on the little Pole. Rarely had Maigret seen a man who combined such self-assurance with such utter serenity. Michael Ozep spoke of killing himself or of visiting the Polish gang as simply, as naturally, as he might refer to brushing his teeth.

" You've never met either of them? "

" No, Monsieur Maigrette."

" All right. I'm going to give you the job. And if there's any trouble, it's on your head." Maigret lowered his eyelids to conceal his too sharp interest in the other's reaction. " In a minute we'll go together to the rue Saint-Antoine. I'll wait for you outside. You'll go up to the room, picking a time when the woman is there alone. You'll tell her you're a fellow Pole and you happened to learn that the police are raiding the hotel tonight—"

Ozep said nothing.

" You understand? "

" Yes."

" It's all set? "

" I must confess something to you, Monsieur Maigrette . . ."

" You're turning yellow? "

" Yellow? I do not under—ah!—yes. No, I am not turning yellow. But I should prefer to arrange the matter in a different way . . . I—I am a timid man with the ladies. And the ladies

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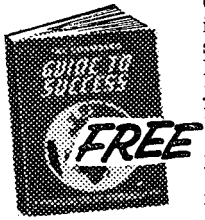

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are intelligent, far more intelligent than we men. Therefore, she will see that I am lying. And because I know that she will see that I am lying, I shall blush. And when I blush . . ."

Maigret sat motionless, absorbing this unlikely explanation.

" I should prefer to talk to a man. To the one with the beard, if you like, or the one you call One-Eye, or anyone at all—"

A ray of sunlight pierced slantwise through the office and lit full on Maigret's face. He seemed to be dozing, like a man whose injudiciously heavy lunch obliges him to take a siesta.

" It is exactly the same thing, Monsieur Maigrette . . ."

But Monsieur Maigret did not answer. The only sign that he was still alive was the slim blue spiral which rose from his pipe.

" I am desolated. You demand precisely the one thing which—"

" Forget it! "

" I beg your pardon? "

" I said, forget it . . . Where did you know the woman Olga Tzerewski? "

" I? "

" Answer me."

" I do not understand what you mean . . ."

" Answer me! "

" I do not know this woman. If I knew her, I would tell you so."

" Where did you know her? "

" I swear to you, Monsieur Maigrette, that—"

" *Where did you know her?* "

" Why have you suddenly stopped being nice to me? You talk to me so brutally! To me who came here to place myself at your disposal, to prevent Frenchmen from being murdered by a compatriot—"

" Cut the talk."

" Monsieur, please, ask me anything else—to throw myself under a subway train—"

" I'm asking you to go and see that woman and tell her that we'll make a raid tonight."

" And—and if I refuse? "

" Then you'd better see to it that I never lay eyes on you again."

" Are you really going to arrest the gang tonight? "

" Probably."

" At what time will you make the raid? "

" Let's say one in the morning."

" I am going."

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" Where? "

" To find the woman."

" Just a minute! We're going together."

" It is better that I go alone. If one of them sees us, he will understand that I am assisting the police . . ."

The Pole had hardly left the office, of course, before the Inspector had set a detective at his heels. And without losing a moment Maigret hurried downstairs and leapt into a taxi.

" Corner of rue de Birague and rue Saint-Antoine, as fast as you can make it! "

It was a radiant afternoon. Striped awnings lent a note of colour to the shops. In their shadows dogs sprawled and napped, and all life seemed to run in slow motion. One felt that even the buses had a hard time making headway in the hot heavy air. Their wheels left tracks in the heated asphalt.

Maigret sprang out of the taxi into the house on the corner. On the second floor he opened a door without bothering to knock and found Lucas sitting at the window, still in the rôle of a quiet and curious elderly gentleman.

" Anything new, Inspector? "

" Anybody at home across the way? "

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The room had been chosen for its strategic position; you could see straight into the two rooms of the Hotel Beauséjour which the Poles occupied.

In this heat all the windows of another adjoining room were unshuttered and open, revealing a young girl, scantily clad, asleep on a bed.

"Well, well, Lucas! Looks like you don't find your job too boring . . ."

A pair of field glasses on a chair gave evidence that Lucas attended to his work conscientiously and missed no detail, however slight.

"At the moment," said the sergeant, "there are two of them in the rooms, but there'll be only one in a minute. The man's getting dressed. He stayed in bed all morning, as usual."

"That's The Beard?"

"Yes. There were three of them for lunch: The Beard, the woman, and One-Eye. One-Eye left as soon as he'd eaten. Then The Beard got up and began to dress . . . Well! He's just put on a clean shirt. That doesn't happen very often."

Maigret walked over to the window. The hairy giant was knotting his tie. You could see the man's lips move as he looked at himself in the mirror.

Behind him the blonde woman was cleaning up, gathering papers and rolling them into a ball, turning off the stove, dusting the frame of a bright-coloured picture on the wall.

"If only we knew what they're saying!" Lucas sighed. "There are times when it drives me crazy. I watch them talking and talking and they never stop."

"The limitless resources of the police," said Maigret dryly, "do not include a lip-reader who knows Polish."

"It gets on my nerves. I'm beginning to understand the torture it must be to be deaf."

"Do you think the woman will stay there?"

"This isn't the time she usually goes out. And if she meant to, she would have put on her grey suit."

Olga was wearing the same dark wool dress in which she had done her marketing that morning. While she cleaned up her bohemian establishment she kept smoking a cigarette without ever taking it from her lips, in the fashion of the habitual smoker.

"She never talks," Maigret observed.

"This isn't the time she does that, either. It's in the evenings that she gets to talking, when they're all gathered around her. Or a few times when she's alone with the one I call Spinach—

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which doesn't happen very often. Either I'm badly mistaken or she has a weakness for Spinach. He's the best-looking of the lot."

It was a strange experience to be in an unknown room like this, to look into the lives of people and come to know their smallest gestures.

"You're getting as snoopy as a concierge, Lucas."

"That's what I'm here for, isn't it? I can even tell you that the little girl over there—the one who's sleeping so soundly—was making love last night until three in the morning with a young man in a dinner jacket who left at dawn, undoubtedly so he could get into his family's house unnoticed . . . Hold on! Now The Beard's leaving."

"Just look at him. He's practically elegant!"

"Not so bad. But he looks more like a foreign wrestler than a man of the world."

"Well, let's say a wrestler who's doing good business," Maigret conceded.

No good-bye kiss across the way. The man simply disappeared from view, and a minute later he emerged on the pavement and set off towards the Place de la Bastille.

"Derain will pick him up," Lucas announced, sitting there like a huge spider at the centre of its web. "But he knows he's being followed. He won't do anything but walk around and maybe stop for a drink somewhere."

As for the woman, she had taken a road map out of a drawer and spread it on the table.

Ozep couldn't have taken a taxi, Maigret calculated; he must have come by *métro*, in which case he should arrive at any moment.

If he's coming . . . he corrected himself.

HE did come. They saw him arrive, hesitate, wander up and down the pavement, while the detective trailing him displayed great interest in a fish stall in the rue Saint-Antoine.

Seen from above like this, the tiny Pole seemed even thinner, even more insignificant. Maigret experienced, for a moment, a pang of remorse. He could hear the poor devil's voice repeating a hundred times, in involved explanation, his famous "Monsieur Maigrette . . ."

He was hesitating, that was obvious. He seemed even to be afraid, staring around him with a visible anguish.

"Do you know what he's looking for?" the Inspector asked Lucas.

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" The little pale fellow? No. Maybe some money to get into the hotel? "

" He's looking for me. He's saying to himself that I must be somewhere around and if by some miracle I've changed my mind . . ."

Too late now.

Michael Ozep had plunged into the dark hallway of the hotel. They could follow him in their minds. He would be climbing the stairs, reaching the first floor . . .

" He's still stalling," Maigret announced. " The door should have opened before this. He's on the landing. He's going to knock. He's knocked—look! "

The blonde girl started, shoved the map with an instinctive movement back in the dresser, and went towards the door. For a moment they could see nothing. The two were in the invisible part of the room. Then suddenly the woman appeared. Something about her had changed. Her steps were fast, decisive. She went straight to the window, closed it, then drew the dark curtains.

Lucas turned to the Inspector with a quizzical smile. " Well, now! " He laughed. But his smile faded as he noticed that Maigret appeared to be concerned.

" What time is it, Lucas? "

" Ten past three."

" In your opinion, what are the chances that one of the gang will come back to the hotel in the next hour? "

" I doubt it. Unless, as I was telling you, Spinach, if he knows The Beard is out of the way. You don't look very happy."

" I don't like the way she closed that window."

" Are you afraid for your little Pole? "

Maigret said nothing.

" Have you thought," Lucas went on, " that we haven't any real proof that he is in that room? It's true we saw him go into the hotel. But he might perfectly well have gone to some other room, and somebody else came—"

Maigret shrugged his shoulders and sighed. . .

" *What time is it, Lucas?* "

" Twenty past three. Do you want to go over and see what's happening? "

" Not yet. But I'm probably going to make a fool of myself . . . Where can you telephone? "

" In the next room. He's a tailor who does piece-work for one of the big houses, so he has to have a phone."

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" Good. Try not to let him listen in. Telephone the chief, and tell him I want him to send me twenty armed men at once. They're to spread a cordon around the Hotel Beauséjour and wait for my signal."

Maigret's expression indicated the seriousness of this order, which was so out of character, for the Inspector usually laughed at police mobilisation.

" You think there'll be dirty work going on? " Lucas asked.

" If it hasn't already gone on . . ."

His eyes remained fixed on the window, on the filthy glass panes, on the crimson velvet curtains of the time of Louis Philippe.

When Lucas came back from the telephone, he found the Inspector still in the same place, still frowning thoughtfully.

" The boss says please be careful. There was a detective killed only last week, and if there should be another accident—"

" Be quiet, will you? "

" Do you think that Stan the Killer—"

" I don't think anything! I've thought so much about this case since this morning that I've got a headache. Now I'm satisfied just to have impressions; and at the moment I have the impression that some disagreeable things are happening or are about to happen."

In the nearby room the young girl was still asleep, her mouth open, her legs bent back. Higher up, on the fourth floor, somebody was trying to play an accordion, incessantly repeating, with the same false notes, the same foxtrot refrain.

" Do you want me to go over? " Lucas suggested.

Maigret gave him a harsh look, as if his subordinate had reproached him for lack of courage.

" Do you think I'd hesitate to go myself? You're forgetting one thing: once we're over there, it's too late. If we go and find nothing, we'll never pin anything on that gang. That's why I'm hesitating . . . If only that girl hadn't closed the window! " He suddenly lifted his eyebrows. " Tell me—the other times, when she's been alone with a man, has she ever closed the window? "

" Never."

" Then she hadn't any suspicion of your presence here."

" She probably took me for just another foolish old man."

" So it isn't the girl who had the idea of closing the window but the character who came in."

" Ozep? "

" Ozep or somebody else. The one who came in must have told the girl to close the window before he showed himself."

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Maigret suddenly took his hat from the chair, emptied his pipe, and scraped the bowl with his index finger.

"Where are you going, boss?"

"I'm waiting for our men to get here . . . Look! There are two of them by the bus stop. And some others in that parked taxi . . . If I stay inside five minutes without opening that window, you'll come in with our men."

"You have your gun?"

A few moments later Lucas could see Maigret crossing the street, could see Detective Janvier notice him and break off his task of wiping the tables on the terrace.

After what seemed a miraculously short interval, the window across the way opened. Maigret signalled to his sergeant to join him.

From across the street Lucas had gathered that the room was empty save for the Inspector.

He stumbled up a dark staircase through the stench of bad cooking and worse plumbing and entered the room, only to start back as he found the body of a woman stretched out at his feet.

It was as if the murderer had wished to leave his signature on his crime. The woman's throat had been cut, as with all the other victims of Stan. There was blood everywhere.

The bright picture on the wall turned out, on closer inspection, to be a portrait of Olga—even blonder, even more fresh-skinned than she had been in life. Lucas looked from the lushly alluring portrait to the unappetising sight on the floor. He felt oddly like a drinking man who sees a bottle of fine brandy smashed.

"It was your Pole?"

Maigret shrugged his shoulders, still standing rooted in the middle of the room.

"Shall I give his description to our men so they can see that he doesn't leave the hotel? And I'd like to put a man on the roof, just in case—"

"Go ahead."

"Shall I call the chief?"

"In a minute."

It was no easy job to talk with Maigret when he was like this. Lucas tried to put himself in his shoes. Maigret himself had said he'd make a fool of himself. But this was worse than looking foolish. He had mobilised a large body of police when it was too late, when the crime had already been committed under Maigret's very eyes—almost with his consent, since he'd been the one who had sent Ozep into the Hotel Beauséjour.

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"And if any of the gang come back, shall I arrest them?"

Maigret nodded indifferently, and at last Lucas went out.

"WHERE'S Maigret?" the chief demanded of Lucas before he was halfway out of his car.

"In the room. Number nineteen on the second floor. The people in the hotel don't know about it yet."

A few moments later the director of the Judiciary Police found Maigret sitting in a chair in the middle of the room, two steps from the body.

"Well, my friend! It looks to me as though we are in a pretty fix!"

For answer he received a grunt.

"So the notorious killer was none other than the little man who offered you his services! You must admit, Maigret, you might have been somewhat less trustful; Ozep's attitude was suspicious, to say the least . . ."

A heavy vertical furrow seamed Maigret's brow and his jaws jutted out, giving his whole face a striking quality of power.

"You think he hasn't managed to slip out of the hotel yet?"

"I'm sure of it," said Maigret.

"You haven't searched the hotel?"

"Not yet."

"You think he'll let himself be captured easily?"

Then Maigret's gaze moved slowly away from the window, shifted towards the director.

"If I'm wrong, the man will try to kill as many people as he can before he's arrested. If I'm not wrong, things will take care of themselves."

"I don't understand."

"I tell you again, chief: I can be wrong. Anybody can be wrong. In that case, I beg your pardon, because there's going to be trouble. There's something in this case that doesn't fit; I can feel it. If Ozep was Stan, there was no reason why . . ." His voice trailed off.

"You're staying here, Maigret?"

"Pending further instructions, yes."

"Then I'll go and see what our men are doing outside."

They had arrested Spinach when, as Lucas had foreseen, he had come to pay his call on the young woman. When they told him that Olga had been killed, he turned pale; but he showed no reaction when they spoke of Ozep.

A half-hour later it was One-Eye's turn to come home and be

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arrested on the threshold. He submitted impassively; but when they told him of the woman's death, he tried to break free from his handcuffs and leap upstairs.

"Who did it?" he shouted. "Who killed her? One of you, wasn't it?"

"It was Ozep, alias Stan the Killer."

The man quieted down as if by magic. He frowned as he repeated, "Ozep?"

"You aren't going to tell us you didn't know your boss's real name?"

It was the chief in person who conducted this hasty questioning in a corridor, and he had the impression that a faint smile crossed the prisoner's lips.

Then came another of the gang, the one they called the Chemist. He simply answered all questions with an air of absolute confusion, as if he had never heard of the woman nor of Ozep nor of Stan.

Maigret was still upstairs with the dead woman, hunting for the key that would at last enable him to understand what had happened.

"All right . . ." he murmured when Lucas told him of the arrest of The Beard, who had begun by raging like a fiend and ended by bawling like a calf.

Suddenly he raised his head. "Do you notice something, Lucas? That's four that they've arrested, and not one of them's put up any real resistance. Whereas a man like Stan—"

"But since Stan is Ozep—"

"Have you found him?"

"Not yet. We had to let all the accomplices come home before we turned the hotel upside down. Now that we have almost all of them, the big boss is laying siege. Our men are downstairs and they're going to go through everything."

"Listen, Lucas . . ."

The sergeant had been about to leave. He paused, feeling for Maigret something akin to pity.

"One-Eye is not Stan. Spinach is not Stan. The Beard is not Stan. But I'm convinced that Stan lived in this hotel and was the focus around which the others gathered."

Lucas said nothing. Let the Inspector have his monomania.

"If Ozep was Stan, he had no reason to come here to kill an accomplice. If he was not Stan . . ."

Suddenly Maigret rose, crossed to the wall and pulled down the brightly coloured picture of Olga. He tore away the tape that framed it, revealing lines of lettering above and below the face.

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He handed it to Lucas. The sergeant knew enough English to make out both the line above:

REAL LIFE DETECTIVE CASES

and the lines below:

THE PRETTY POLE AND THE TERROR OF TERRE HAUTE

Maigret was smiling now. "Vanity," he said. "They can't ever resist it. They had to buy the magazine when they saw it on the bookstalls, and she had to frame the picture.

"I knew I'd seen her face before. I do remember the case roughly. I kept some cuttings on it. Very similar to ours. In the Middle West of America, four or five years ago. A gang attacking lonely farms, cutting throats . . . Just like ours . . . and they had a woman leader. The American press took great pleasure in describing her atrocities."

"Then Stan . . .?"

". . . was Olga. Almost certainly. I'll be positive in an hour, now that I know what to look for in the office. Are you coming with me, Lucas?"

"But Ozep?" Lucas asked, as they settled back in the cab.

"It's Ozep I especially want to look up. That is, I'm hoping I'll find something about him. If he killed this woman, he must have had a motive . . . Listen, Lucas: when I wanted to send him to the others, he agreed at once. But when I gave him an errand to the woman, he refused, and I was forced to use pressure. In other words, the rest of the gang did not know him—*but the woman did.*"

It took a good half hour to find the cuttings. Order was not Maigret's strong point.

"Read this! Always allowing for the exaggeration of the American press—they like to give the readers their money's worth—*The Female Fiend . . . The Deadly Pole . . . Girl*, 23, *Heads Murder Gang . . .*"

The press revelled in the exploits of the Polish girl and produced many proofs of her photogenic qualities. At eighteen Stephanie Polintskaja was already known to the Warsaw police. Around this time she met a man who married her and strove to curb her evil instincts. She had a child by him. One day the man came home from work to find that his wife had vanished, taking everything of value with her. The child's throat had been cut.

"You know who that man was?" Maigret asked.

"Ozep?"

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" Here's his picture, and a good likeness. You understand now? Stephanie, nicknamed Stan, ran wild in America. How she escaped the American prisons I do not know. In any case she took refuge in France, surrounded herself with a fresh lot of brutes, and took up her old career.

" Her husband learns from the papers that she is in Paris, that the police are on her trail. Does he want to rescue her once more? I doubt it. I'm rather inclined to think that he wants to make sure that the detestable murderess of his child shall not escape punishment. That's why he offers me his services. He hasn't the guts to work alone—he needs the police to help him. And then, this afternoon, I force his hand . . .

" Face to face with his former wife, what can he do? Kill or be killed! She certainly would not hesitate to destroy the only man outside the gang who could testify against her.

" So he killed . . . And do you want to know what I think? I'm betting that they'll find him somewhere in the hotel, more or less seriously wounded. After muffing two attempts at suicide, it would amaze me if he muffed the third. Now you can go back to the hotel and—"

" No use! " It was the chief's voice. " Ozep hanged himself in a vacant room on the fifth floor."

" He made it," Maigret sighed. " Poor devil! "

" You're sorry for him? "

" Indeed I am. Especially since I'm somewhat responsible for his death . . . I don't know if it means I'm getting old, but I certainly took long enough to find the solution—"

" What solution? " the chief asked suspiciously.

" The solution to the whole problem! " Lucas intervened happily. " The Inspector has reconstructed the case."

" That so, Maigret? "

" It is. You know, I don't think I've ever been so mad at myself in my life. I felt that the solution was there, within reach, that just one little touch . . . And you all kept buzzing round me like horseflies, telling me about arrests that didn't mean a thing . . . And then I remembered the American detective magazine and the woman's face on the cover! "

Maigret took a deep breath, loaded his pipe, and asked Lucas for matches. The afternoon vigil had used up all his own.

" What do you say, chief? It's seven o'clock. Suppose we three settle down to a nice glass of beer? Provided that Lucas gets rid of his wig and makes himself respectable again."

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Translated by Anthony Boucher

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Leisure-Pleasure

We suggest eating, drinking and giving as the best ingredients to begin this festive season . . .

SINCE the war, because of the increase in foreign travel, the word aperitif has come more and more into general use, not only in home entertaining but in restaurant parlance as well.

An aperitif is, in fact, a liquid appetiser not intended to satisfy hunger but rather to sharpen the palate for the joys to come. It is, in truth, a matter of calories.

A measure of Black and White or any other good scotch whisky with water or soda is a good aperitif and contains only 90 calories. In contrast, a dry martini contains 200, and a glass of wine between 100 and 120, according to its alcoholic strength.

A Zombie cocktail, which contains fruit juices, apricot brandy, sugar and two sorts of rum, scores 510, so it is definitely not a liquid appetiser. But a plain chilled Vermouth is, especially one from Chambery such as Richard or Dolin.

One of the best aperitifs is a Campari soda . . . a measure of Campari topped up with soda, but it must have ice and a slice of lemon in it, and be stirred as it is served. Dubonnet treated in the same way is good, and quite out of the ordinary is the French sweet, muscat-flavoured wine Frontignac, chilled, with a dash of soda. It costs about 10s. per bottle. Dry sherry, chilled, is admirable as an aperitif. The Spanish-bottled sherries, and Montilla, are something special. But becoming fashionable for this purpose is white port, which also should be chilled. Sandeman's are offering a Porto Branco in eye-catching bottles at 20s. a time. Another newcomer to the British market is the popular Danish appetiser, Cherry Dana, served cold.

Danish schnapps—Akavit Aalburg—Pernod, and its Levantine relatives Ouzo and Zibib, all fall into the aperitif group, as does vodka. Serve really cold is the rule in all cases, and in the case of Pernod, Ouzo and Zibib, with water. If you really want to

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sharpen the appetite, one is enough. Perhaps the easiest aperitif of all, and the safest if a menu of quality and fine wines lies ahead, is a glass of champagne or white sparkling wine, or just a glass of dry white wine; a Riesling from Alsace, Yugoslavia or Hungary, or a Muscadet from the Loire. Expensive, but unique as an aperitif and as a wine, is Chateau Chalon from the Jura, but it does cost about 32s. per bottle.

OUR MAN IN THE KITCHEN:

Most people feel that a snack adds to the pleasure of drinking. With cocktails, it's a must. With the aperitif it is a matter of personal preference. In any case, when entertaining in the home it's wise to be prepared—so is it going to be canapés or patties?

If it's to be patties, you can save yourself a lot of trouble by buying ready-made pastry cases—Huntley and Palmers make them, and all you have to do is fill them. If canapés, let us dispense with those soggy little pieces of toast, and bake them in the oven instead. Cut your bread into two inch squares, put on to a baking-sheet and bake in a slow oven till light brown. Cool before using. Then butter them and top with cream cheese and capers; lightly-scrambled egg with a strip of anchovy on top; potted shrimps, or caviar if the funds run to it. A two ounce tin of caviar will go a long way. Add a squeeze of lemon juice before you use it.

Caviar also makes a delicious bouchée as follows: hard-boil some eggs. Slice them and remove the yolks. Place the rings of white on small squares of buttered brown bread. Fill the centres with caviar. Then take the yolks, mash them with an equal quantity of butter, season rather well, and fill pastry cases, or top canapés with the mixture. And if there's any caviar left, you can spread it on potato crisps.

Crisp hollow celery, cut into two inch lengths, can be stuffed with a mixture made of equal quantities of cream cheese and Roquefort cheese, beaten well together.

Here's a rather special snack. Take a packet of Philadelphia Cheese Spread, beat in two tablespoons of medium sherry and a little salt. Spread on thin slices of ham, then roll firmly like a Swiss roll. Cut into two inch lengths and secure with toothpicks.

And, talking of toothpicks, a most appetising centrepiece to your buffet table would be the largest red apple you can find, spiked all over with toothpick snacks, including cubes of pineapple and cheddar cheese, stuffed olives, pickled onions, and tiny sausages, as well as those above.

The Americans call them dunks, and we call them dips, but

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by any name they're a wonderful contribution to the party spirit. A large supply of crisps, and one of the following dips—or even both—and you're away!

ONION DIP: simple and stupendous!

Mix one packet of Maggi Onion Soup with a large tin of evaporated milk. Beat well. Allow to stand at least one hour before using.

AVOCADO DIP:

You will need: 1 large avocado; 1 small grated onion; 1 clove of garlic; 1 tablespoon lemon juice; salad cream.

Peel and mash the avocado, add the grated onion. Crush the clove of garlic and add, then the lemon juice and a little pepper. Thin to a suitable consistency with salad cream, beating well.

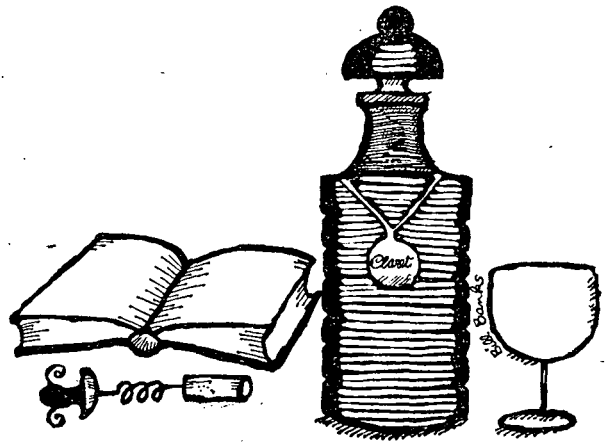
BOOKSHELF THIS MONTH:

David Beaty's latest novel is called **The Siren Song.** This is a strange mix-up of commercial aviation and sex, but results in a decidedly readable novel.

Each of the three protagonists, the ravishing, discontented wife; the ineffectual, reluctant lover; the distasteful, sick-minded husband, tell their own part of the story as it moves towards an inevitable and horrid end.

The husband's tale is by far the best bit of writing, though his supposedly unconscious self-portrait is over-carefully etched in, as though the author doubted our ability to get his meaning.

You'll find this a difficult book to put down.



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In **A Night at Sea** Margaret Lane writes with her usual cool, clever skill. The action takes place in twenty-four hours, veering to and fro between a flat in London and the ocean-going yacht *Manatee* in the Mediterranean. It concerns two women fighting for one man, the husband and the lover. They have reached the point of no return when the seemingly insoluble choice must be made. Very cautiously I can reveal to you that the last chapter of this novel is terrific. Cautiously—because our advance copies came with a little note from the publisher asking that the end should be kept secret.

All Heaven in a Rage by E. S. Turner. A thoroughly uncomfortable book to read, made more so by deliberately cool, detached writing. It is the history of how we were persuaded, shamed and legislated into showing some little mercy for the unfortunate animals over which we hold dominion.

The book ends with a deeply disturbing question—where are we now? Have we really progressed or are we just shutting our eyes and ears to what we would rather not see or hear!

I am afraid this is a book you should read.

Warlocks wishful of keeping the upper hand of the weaker sex of their own kind as well as of mere humans, would be wise to study **A Witch's Guide to Gardening,** a fascinating book by Dorothy Jacob. A well-stocked garden is a must for any successful witch, she tells us, and goes on to give us such essential information and useful charms as:

When this bean shall rot away
So my warts shall soon decay

which, chanted when rubbing the white down inside a bean-pod, has seldom been known to fail. Nor should you forget when sowing beans always to set four times as many as you need for yourself:

One to rot, and one to grow,
One for the pigeon and one for the crow.

Those of us who have taken parsley for granted have been running grave risks. This is a plant in which the devil has a special interest. To begin, never should it be sown except on a Good Friday, the only safe day to keep its evil potential in check. *On no account* must it ever be transplanted or dreadful disaster will overtake the household!

Maybe the eyes of some poodle owners will grow misty as they read **Every Night, Josephine!** but not those of this sourpuss.

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Josephine, black and very, very comely (she has a slight figure problem), belongs to American actress-author Jacqueline Susann.

Josephine enjoys freshly roasted chicken and pâté, visits a beauty parlour regularly, has her own diet specialist (honest!) and her extensive wardrobe includes a pink rhinestone-studded leash and a chic little scarlet coat for windy days.

Though a pretty pup, Josephine came as an unpleasant surprise to "Daddy" the night he came home and first found her in residence:

> "I could tell he had had a good day. He was whistling. I sat rigid. Josie was more daring. She got off my shoe and wandered out to the foyer to investigate. Irving stopped whistling. Slowly he entered the room.
>
> In a weak voice I said, 'Josie, this is Daddy.'
>
> She got the idea immediately. She rushed to him with such force that she toppled over. Irving seemed to have turned to bronze. Josie tried a little more charm. In fact she threw in her whole bag of tricks. She chewed at his shoelaces. She rolled over on her back. She played cops and robbers with his trousers. She even forced herself to make another puddle on the newspaper.
>
> Irving finally regained his power of speech. He said, 'What is it? And whom does it belong to?'"

(Now I ask you, did he think every French poodle went around calling him Daddy?)

> "I fluttered my eyelashes, 'It's *ours*, darling.'
>
> He said, 'Get rid of it immediately.'"

Of course, he soon realised his mistake and became Josie's devoted slave and who is the humble reviewer of books to suggest that sometimes first thoughts are best?

One of the year's best-chosen titles is **A Sudden Silence**, the first book of a young American, John Minahan.

Very much of today, it concerns itself with the horrid and sordid business of illegal abortion.

Kristi, wealthy, young and lovely is trapped by her own values and the incurable painful illness of her mother, into destroying her unborn baby.

Robert, the man who loves her, tells the story (he is not the father of the child). He is persuaded much against his better judgment to visit and come to terms with a shady doctor, who is sufficiently in debt to risk imprisonment for ready money.

Not soothing reading and not, repeat not, for the very young.

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BOOKS REVIEWED:

David Beaty, *The Siren Song* (Secker and Warburg 21s.)
Margaret Lane, *A Night At Sea* (Hamish Hamilton 18s.)
E. S. Turner, *All Heaven In a Rage* (Michael Joseph 30s.)
Dorothy Jacob, *A Witch's Guide To Gardening* (Elek Books 15s.)
Jacqueline Susann, *Every Night, Josephine!* (Pelham Books 21s.)
John Minahan, *A Sudden Silence* (Heinemann 18s.)

OUR MAN IN MOTORS WRITES:

Since a lot of winter motoring is best done from an armchair usually surrounded by unmanageable map guides, et cetera, I thought the recently published Shell and BP guide to Britain could prove an invaluable aid with a little potted geology, botany and architecture to swot up—sounds splendid. There is a great deal of igneous rock in these parts provided, of course, your companion knows nothing about it. The book also includes introductions to the counties, gazetteers and quite a good map section; the whole thing being well illustrated and thick—936 pages—30s. from most booksellers.

In the car-accessory line there is the easy-to-fit new Desno "4000" roof rack. Aluminium and therefore light and rustless, it will fit almost any car you care to name. It will cost you 99s. 6d.

One way of getting an expensive aroma with a car if leather seating has proved too expensive, is the Cosmic leather wheel glove. This smells good, looks good and as leather always does, feels good. It's porous and ideal for those conditions in which "horses sweat, men perspire but ladies only glow." 35s.

If the woman in your life is ever allowed actually to drive the car, she might appreciate a Bri-nylon pile car mat—an excellent idea for protecting delicate shoe heels. It is washable (zips off its backing), and turns up in dark grey at 35s.

Equally, if she has more money than sense she might buy you one, or even a pair of Microcell car seats from Les Leston. The reclining version is £19 19s. and 10s. carriage, etc. (also available with head rest for an extra £4 10s. plus 3s. 6d. carriage, etc.) They have the advantage of not only being very good and comfortable, but you can always take them out and put the old seats back when you sell the car.

Another useful item if you park in crowded places is K-L's adjustable wing mirror, adjustable that is, from inside the car; very good on saving time and temper, looks pretty sturdy, £4 17s. 6d. complete.

Also from K-L is a windscreen scraper, indispensable for those

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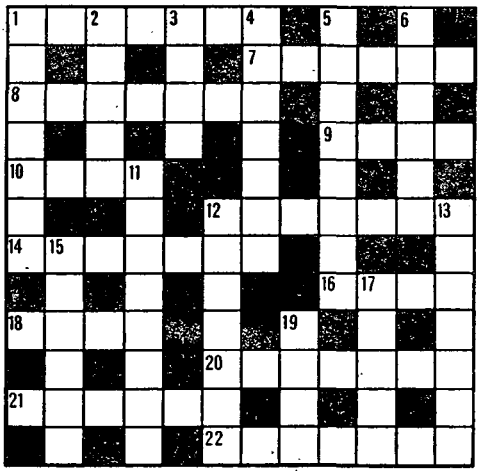
who leave the car out at night and can't be bothered to cover the windscreen with newspaper. It will clean frost or ice and is only 1s. 6d.

One of my favourite accessories, largely because it is so effective, is the sound-proofing kit by Interior Silent Travel. They produce a kit for most of the mass produced cars and they *do* work. Prices are according to make of car.

Wipac produce a neat headlamp flasher switch, something that all motor manufacturers ought to fit and don't—costs 12s. 6d.

Lastly for overnight drivers or chaps with stubble trouble, the cordless, battery-operated Philishave is an absolute godsend.

TEN MINUTE CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1 Airman (7).
7 Ideal state of things (6).
8 Extreme folly (7).
9 To study you must (4).
10 Nearest (4).
12 Treason (anag.) (7).
14 Answer with a blow? (7).
16 Hard to fathom (4).
18 Not the leaf (4).
20 Scriptural instruction? (7).
21 Table-turning affair? (6).
22 Episcopal see (7).

DOWN

1 Special calendar (7).
2 A pointer to subjects dealt with? (5).
3 Prepared to drive off (4).
4 Wild West thief (7).
5 Fond of eating (8).
6 Shrew (6).
11 Dwelling (8).
12 Most bills are (7).
13 A thrusting reply (7).
15 Start (6).
17 Eat away! (5).
19 European capital (4).

(Solution on page 118)

SOLUTION TO THE PUZZLE ON PAGE 61

13s. 9d.

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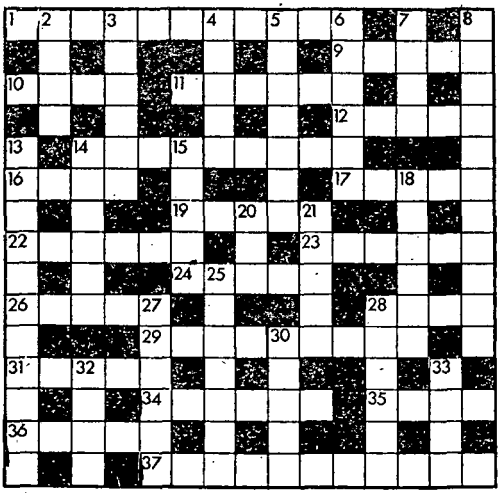
ARGOSY CROSSWORD

Solution next month



ACROSS

1 Disreputable dealer? (4-7).

9 More than usually—wide? (5).

10 Farrar's hero's in American's heart! (4).

11 Levels with a geologist (6).

12 Belgian subject? (5).

14 Confusion! Charm is an advantage (9).

16 Sally's behind in the game (4).

17 Large profit makes news (5).

19 Used many times (5).

22 Just the flower for a rich do! (6).

23 Trial by lot? (6).

24 Sailor's a foot nearer the stern (5).

26 Ring route? (5).

28 Am standing back because of cat (4).

29 Greatness somehow cuts one off (9).

31 Frank is all talk! (5).

34 Catty to Cleo? (6).

35 Cattle are without water! (4).

36 Tree that's getting on (5).

37 Incendiary's fee? (5, 2, 4).

DOWN

2 " Don't give yourself ——! " (Carroll) (4).

3 Pour for bibbers (6).

4 Room at the top? (5).

5 Plainer sweet? (7).

6 New era for old railway in these regions (6).

7 Rusty edge gives lid trouble (4).

8 Larva helps to move tractor? (11).

13 Lordly joint? (5, 2, 4).

14 In panic, utilise Indian dam (6).

15 Nothing hard about her! (5).

18 Dagger-o'-type? (6).

20 Sufficient to eat and drink (3).

21 No money? Out! (3, 2).

25 Bird bit another (7).

27 Cure former trouble (6).

28 Tip for writers (3-3).

30 Back to New York and the struggle! (5).

32 Society road, society language! (4).

33 "——,fat, and forty" (Walter Scott) (4).

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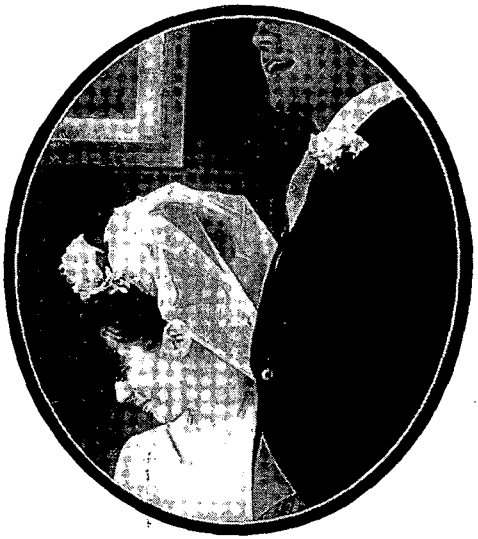
Yorkshire's Young Ones.....No. 2



We should also like to thank...

Simon and Clare are now married and thanks are due to a whole host of people. Simon thoughtfully remembers Mr. Newstead, the local "Yorkshire" Manager..."who has been a friend of the family for many years and advised us on the kind of Life Assurance we should have as well as reminding us that we needed Travel Insurance on our honeymoon-although even he doesn't know where we are going".

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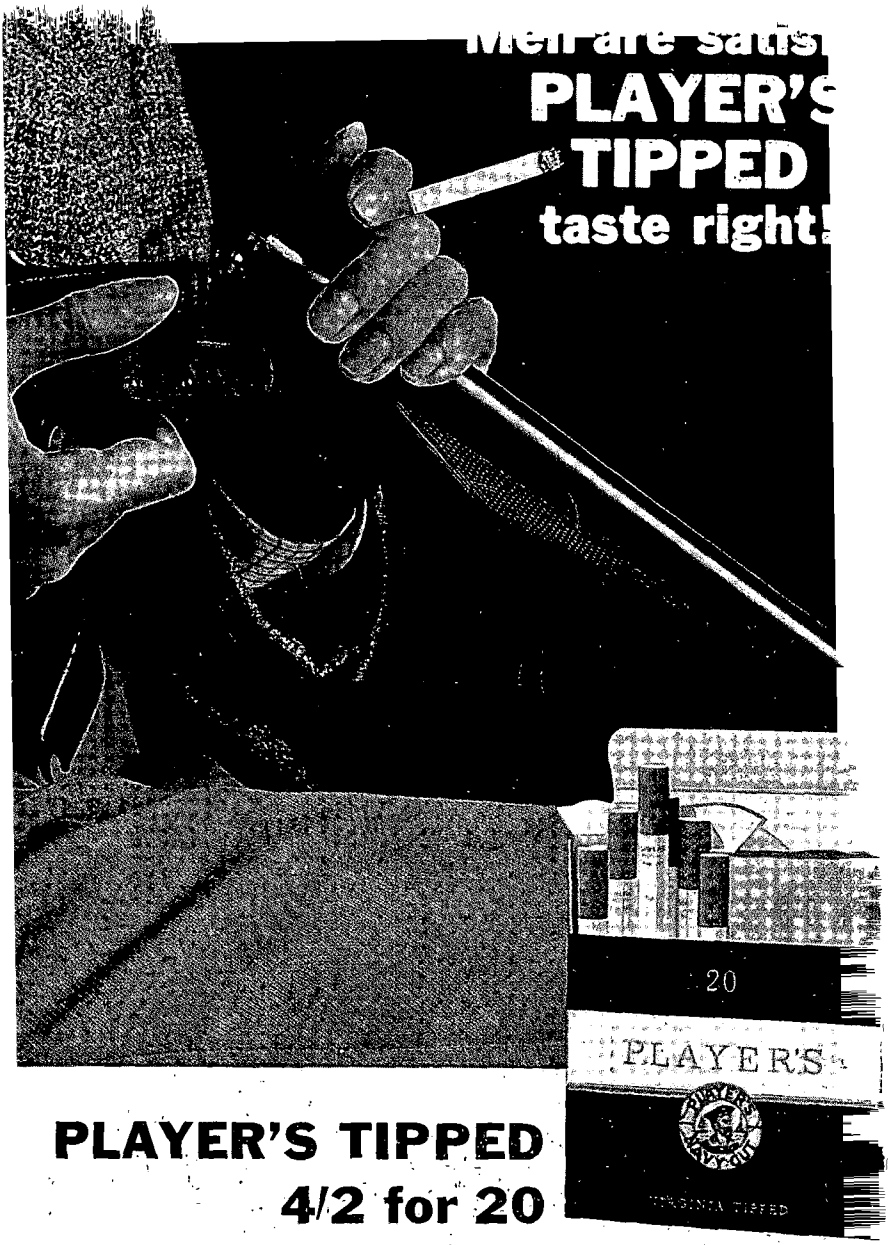

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